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FOREWORD

THIS YEAR we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Indian Independence. It is an appropriate occasion for reviewing the history of the struggle waged by the people of India to achieve this freedom which we cherish. We who live in free India, should know that toil and blood went into its making. This book has been planned as a respectful tribute to the millions of the Indian people and their leaders who sacrificed and suffered in the cause of our Independence.

The task, however, was not an easy one. Though the outline of our freedom movement is well-known, much care, knowledge and skill is required to portray in a concise form the history of this struggle in some depth and with all its nuances, and to give an accurate picture of the diverse forces which contributed to it. What increased the difficulty of the task was the need to make the book not a research work for the scholar but a readable account for the general public, especially the younger generation.

I, therefore, invited some of our well-known historians to plan and produce this book. Dr S. Gopal was the Chairman of this panel, and its members were Dr Satish Chandra, Dr Amales Tripathi, Dr Bipan Chandra, Dr Barun De, Dr Sheikh Ali, and Dr S. R. Mehrotra. These scholars agreed on the framework of the book, and requested Dr Bipan Chandra to write chapters I and II, Dr Tripathi chapters III and IV and Dr Barun De chapters V and VI. The drafts prepared by them were considered by the panel and Shri K. P. Rungachary of the National Book Trust has edited the whole in the light of the various comments and suggestions made by the panel. I am most

grateful to all of them for so readily consenting to undertake this work.

The final text has been approved by the panel. The book, therefore, though short, is authoritative and will, I am sure, be widely read. The National Book Trust is bringing out translations in all the important Indian languages simultaneously. It should be particularly of use to teachers in primary and middle schools, and to students in our higher secondary schools and pre-university classes.

NEW DELHI
2 August 1972

S. NURUL HASAN
Minister of Education,
Social Welfare and Culture

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I THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the mid-night hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU addressing the Constituent Assembly and the Indian nation on 15 August 1947. Nehru was speaking as the Prime Minister of a free India. The struggle was over. India was independent.

But what was this 'tryst with destiny' Nehru was speaking about ?

On another midnight hour seventeen years before India became free, on 31 December 1929, as the chimes of the clock heralded the New Year, Nehru as President of the Indian National Congress had unfurled the tri-colour on the banks of the Ravi in Lahore and, in the presence of a vast multitude, announced that the goal of the freedom movement would be 'Purna Swaraj', full and total independence. A Pledge was drawn up and adopted and it was decided that the people of India should take this pledge at public meetings on 26 January 1930 to proclaim their will to fight for their independence. That day was declared Independence Day and it was because of the historic importance of that day that later in 1950 when the new Republican Constitution of India was ready, it was introduced on 26 January. Ever since then each year this day is celebrated in India as Republic Day.

It was to the events of 1929-30 that Nehru was referring when he spoke about our 'tryst with destiny'. The pledge that was taken on that day was redeemed on 15 August 1947 when India became free.

But India's fight for freedom did not begin in 1929. This struggle had started many decades earlier. And this book tells you the story of India's historic struggle for freedom and independence.

Indian history goes back to many centuries before the Christian era. Not surprisingly, the course of this long history was not even and uniform. For a long time India was not even one country but was made up of many kingdoms; there were times when vast portions of this sub-continent came under the rule of one empire; the country was invaded many times by foreigners; some of them settled down here, became Indians, and ruled as Kings and Emperors; some of them, on the other hand, plundered and looted the country and went back with the riches they were able to collect; there were periods of great achievement; there were times of stagnation and misery. But when we speak of India's freedom struggle we refer to the most recent period of Indian history, when Britain was ruling over India and the people of India were fighting to overthrow that foreign domination and become free.

British rule in India may be said to have started in 1757 when at the Battle of Plassey forces of the English East India Company defeated Siraj-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Bengal. But a powerful national struggle against British imperialism developed in India during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. This struggle was the result of a clash of interests between those of the Indian people and those of the British rulers. To understand this clash of interests it is necessary to study the basic character of British rule in India and its impact on Indian society. The very nature of the foreign rule resulted in nationalistic sentiments arising among

the Indian people and produced the material, moral, intellectual and political conditions for the rise and development of a powerful national movement.

STAGES OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

From 1757 the British had used their control over India to promote their own interests. But it would be wrong to think that the basic character of their rule remained the same throughout. It passed through several stages in its long history of nearly 200 years. The nature of British rule and imperialism, as also its policies and impact, changed with the changing pattern of Britain's own social, economic and political development.

To begin with, that is, even before 1757, the English East India Company was interested only in making money. It wanted a monopoly of the trade with India and the East, so that there would be no other English or European merchants or trading companies to compete with it. The Company also did not want the Indian merchants to compete with it for the purchase in India or sale abroad of Indian products. In other words, the Company wanted to sell its products at as high a price as possible and buy Indian products as cheaply as possible so that it could make the maximum profits. This would not be possible if there was ordinary trade in which various companies and persons competed. It was easy enough to keep out its English competitors by using bribery and various other economic and political means to persuade the British Government to grant the East India Company a monopoly of the right to trade with India and the East. But the British laws could not keep out the merchants and the trading companies of other European nations. The East India Company had, therefore, to wage long and fierce wars to achieve their aim. Since the

trading areas were far away, across many seas, the Company had to maintain a powerful navy.

It was also not easy to prevent competition from the Indian merchants since they were protected by the powerful Mughal empire. In fact, in the 17th century and the early part of the 18th century the very right to trade inside India had to be secured by humbly petitioning the Mughal emperors and their provincial Governors. But as the Mughal empire became weak in the early 18th century, and the far-flung coastal areas began to get out of control, the Company increasingly used its superior naval power to maintain its trading presence along the Indian coast and to drive out the Indian merchants from coastal and foreign trade.

There was another very important consideration. The Company required large amounts of money to wage wars both in India and on the high seas and to maintain naval forces and armies and forts and trading posts in India. Neither the British Government nor the East India Company possessed such large financial resources. At least a part of the money, therefore, had to be raised in India. The Company did this through local taxation in its coastal fortified towns such as Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Gradually it became necessary to expand its territories in India in order to be able to levy more taxes over larger areas and increase their financial resources.

About this time British capitalism was also beginning to enter its most vigorous phase of development. To develop more and more, it needed immense capital for investment in industries, trade and agriculture. As the resources for such investments were limited in Britain at that time the capitalists began to look to the plundering of foreign countries for finding the necessary capital for the development of British capitalism. India was reputed to be rich and was, therefore, seen as capable of playing an important role in this respect.

Both the objectives—the monopoly of trade and control over financial resources—were rapidly fulfilled, and beyond the imagination of the Directors of the East India Company when Bengal and South India rapidly came under the Company's political control during the 1750's and 1760's.

The East India Company now acquired direct control over the State revenues of the conquered areas and was in a position to grab the accummulated wealth of the local rulers, nobles and zamindars. It appropriated large parts of this wealth and State revenues entirely for its own benefit and for that of its employees and for financing its further expansion in India. For example, from 1765 to 1770 the Company sent out of Bengal nearly 33 per cent of its net revenue in the form of goods. Moreover, the officials of the Company sent out large sums out of their illegal incomes extorted from Indian merchants, officials and zamindars. The wealth drained out of India played an important part in financing Britain's capitalist development. It has been estimated that it constituted nearly two per cent of Britain's national income at the time.

At the same time the Company used its political power to acquire monopolistic control over Indian trade and production. The Indian merchants were gradually squeezed out, while the weavers and other craftsmen were compelled either to sell their products at uneconomic rates or to hire themselves out to the Company at low wages. An important feature of British rule in this first stage was that no basic changes were introduced in the administration, the judicial system, transport and communication, the methods of agricultural or industrial production and business management, or in the educational and intellectual fields. At this stage British rule was not very different from the traditional empires which collected agricultural surplus from its territories, though it was much more efficient in doing so.

Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, the British felt no need to penetrate to the villages so long as their economic surplus was successfully sucked out through the traditional machinery of revenue collection. Consequently, whatever administrative changes were made applied to the top of the structure of revenue collection and were geared to the single aim of making the collection of revenue more efficient.

In the intellectual field no attempt was made to spread modern ideas which were changing the entire way of life in the West. Only two new educational institutions were started during the second half of the 18th century, one at Calcutta and the other at Benares. Both were centres for traditional Persian and Sanskritic learning. Even the Christian missionaries were kept out of the Company's dominions.

It should also be remembered that India was conquered by the East India Company at a time when the era of the great mercantilist trading corporations was already over in Britain. Within British society, the Company represented the dying, and not the rising, social forces.

THE ERA OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM AND FREE TRADE

Immediately after the East India Company became a territorial power in India, an intense struggle broke out in Britain as to whose interests the newly-acquired empire would serve. Year after year the Company was made to yield ground to the other commercial and industrial interests in Britain. By 1813 it was left with a mere shadow of economic and political power in India; the real power was now wielded by the British Government in the interests of the British capitalist class as a whole.

Britain had in the meantime undergone the Industrial Revolution. This made her the leading manufacturing and exporting

country of the world. The Industrial Revolution was also responsible for a major change inside Britain itself. The industrial capitalists became in course of time the dominant elements in the British economy with powerful political influence. The colonial administration and policy in India were now to be necessarily directed to their interests. Their interest in the empire was, however, very different from that of the East India Company, which was only a trading corporation. Consequently, British rule in India entered its second stage.

The British industrialists did not gain much from the monopolisation of the export of Indian handicrafts or the direct appropriation of Indian revenues. On the other hand, they needed foreign outlets for their ever-increasing output of manufactured goods. A vast and highly populated country such as India was a standing temptation. At the same time British industries needed raw materials and the British working men needed food-stuffs, which had to be imported. In other words, Britain now wanted India as a subordinate trading partner, as a market to be exploited and as a dependent colony to produce and supply the raw materials and food-stuffs Britain needed.

But there was one problem. India had to pay for the goods imported. She also had to export a good deal of wealth to pay dividends to the Company's shareholders and pensions for British civil and military officials. These officials would also have to be permitted to take their savings back home with them. The profits of British merchants and planters would also have to be drained out of India. India would also have to pay interest and dividends on British capital invested in this country. For all this it was necessary that India must export some products to Britain and other countries. But India's traditional handicraft exports had come to a virtual standstill owing to the Company's exploitative policies and, what was more important, the British did not want to allow India to export goods that would compete

with Britain's home industries, as, for example, textiles. Therefore, only agricultural raw materials and other non-manufactured goods could be exported. Apart from opium, whose production and export to China was now further developed in spite of the Chinese ban on its import, the Government of India now promoted the export of raw cotton, jute and silk, oil-seeds, wheat, hides and skins, and indigo and tea. Thus India's pattern of foreign trade underwent a dramatic change, but not for the better. For centuries an exporter of cotton textiles and other handicraft products, India became during the 19th century an importer of cotton textiles and an exporter of cotton and other raw materials.

India could not perform its new functions within the economic, political and cultural setting that was then existing. It had to be changed and transformed to be able to play its new role in the development of British economy. Its traditional economic structure had to be changed. The British Indian Government set out after 1813 to transform Indian administration, economy and society to achieve exactly these ends.

In the economic field, British capitalists were given free entry into India and were permitted to carry on their economic activities as they pleased. Above all, free trade was introduced and India's ports and markets were thrown wide open to British manufactures. India had to admit British goods free or at nominal tariff rates. Administration was made more detailed and comprehensive and included a large variety of activities, not only tax-collection and maintenance of law and order to keep the trade channels safe. Administration also became wider in compass reaching down to the villages so that British goods could penetrate to the small towns and villages in the interior and to draw out the agricultural products for export. Thus British administration of India changed vastly and quickly during the 19th century.

Moreover, the entire legal structure of Indian society had to

be overhauled if it was to be based on capitalist commercial relations. The sanctity of contract, for example, must become the basic law and ethic of the land, if the millions of economic transactions needed to promote imports and exports were to become viable. Thus came up a new judicial system based on a new corpus of laws and legal codes, such as the Indian Penal Code and the Civil Procedure Code.

To man the new and vast administrative and judicial machinery of the State and also the lower rungs of British business concerns, a veritable army of educated employees was needed. Britain did not possess enough manpower for the purpose; nor could the Government of India or British businessmen afford to employ for all these jobs Englishmen at the high wages that had to be offered to attract them to the distant Indian colony and its inhospitable climate. Hence modern education that had been introduced after 1813 was expanded after 1833.

The large-scale imports and the even more large-scale exports of the bulky raw materials required a cheap and easy system of transport. The Government, therefore, encouraged the introduction of steamships on the rivers and improved the roads. Above all, it helped in financing the building, after 1853, of a large network of railways linking the major cities and markets of the country to its ports. Nearly 28,000 miles of railways had been built by 1905 at a cost of nearly 350 crores of rupees. Similarly, a modern postal and telegraph system was introduced, which greatly facilitated business transactions.

This period also saw the emergence of a liberal imperialist political ideology among British statesmen and British Indian administrators. Relying on Britain's virtual world-wide monopoly of manufacturing—Britain was the only fully industrialised country during the first half of the 19th century and was consequently known as the workshop of the world—and its control of the seas many of them believed that Britain could carry

on its economic exploitation of India and other countries equally well through indirect or informal domination so long as free trade prevailed. They, therefore, talked of training Indians in the art of self-government and eventually transferring political power to their hands. These pronouncements were to be later used freely by Indian nationalists in the course of their political agitation.

The introduction of a new pattern of economic exploitation during the second stage of British rule did not, of course, mean that the earlier forms of exploitation came to an end. Indian revenues were still needed to conquer the rest of India and to consolidate British rule; to pay for the employment of thousands of Englishmen in superior administrative and military positions at salaries that were fabulous by contemporary standards; and to meet the cost of economic and administrative changes needed to enable colonialism to fully penetrate to the Indian hinterland. Consequently the new phase of British rule resulted in a steep rise in the burden of taxation on the Indian peasant.

At the same time, some of the sectors of Indian production that did not enter into competition with British manufactures—indigo, opium and tea, for example—were developed but kept under the strict control of the Government or British capitalists in India. Moreover, the Free Trade imposed on India was one-sided. Indian products that could still compete with the technologically superior British or British-controlled colonial products were subjected to heavy import duties in Britain. For example, in 1824, Indian textiles paid duties ranging from 30 to 70 per cent. Indian sugar paid a duty that was three times its cost price. In some cases duties in Britain were as high as 400 per cent. Import duties on such products were removed only after their export to Britain ceased altogether. Moreover, the Indian producers were prevented from taking advantage

of the emergence of an all-India market by the Government's decision to erect and maintain a vast structure of internal customs duties. India was thus placed in the paradoxical position of taxing the movement of its own products, while letting foreign goods move free. These internal duties were abolished only in the 1840's by which time the British manufactures had acquired a decisive edge over Indian handicrafts even within the Indian market.

THE ERA OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION FOR COLONIES

The third stage of British rule in India can be said to have begun in the 1860's and was the result of three major changes in the world economic situation. Gradually other countries of Western Europe and North America underwent industrialisation and the manufacturing and financial supremacy of Britain came to an end. France, Belgium, Germany, the United States, Russia, and later, Japan, developed powerful industries and began to search for foreign markets for their products. Intense world-wide competition for markets now began.

Secondly, several major technological developments occurred during the last quarter of the 19th century as a result of the application of scientific knowledge to industry. Modern steel industry is a product of this period. In 1850 world output of steel was only 80,000 tons. Even in 1870 it was less than 700,000 tons. In 1900 it had reached 28 million tons. Modern chemical industries developed during this period as also the use of petroleum as fuel for the internal combustion engine and the use of electricity for industrial purposes. This meant that, on the one hand, the pace of industrial development was speeded up and, on the other, the new industries consumed immense

quantities of raw materials without which the entire industrial structure would be jeopardised. Rapid industrial development also led to the continuous expansion of urban populations needing more and more food. An extensive search for new and secure sources of raw materials and food-stuffs now began and covered the entire world. States vied with one another to acquire exclusive control over the actual or potential sources of agricultural and mineral raw materials in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Thirdly, the development of trade and industry and the extended exploitation of colonies and colonial markets began to produce an unlimited accummulation of capital in the developed capitalist countries. This capital was, moreover, increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer banks and corporations and trusts and cartels. Outlets had to be found for the investment of this capital. There was, of course, a great deal of room for investment in the countries concerned, for the majority of people there were still living in poverty. But the working class in these countries was beginning to be organised and any large-scale investment and consequent expansion would improve its bargaining power leading to lower profits even in the existing industries. On the other hand, if this capital was invested abroad to produce mineral and agricultural raw materials, several objectives could be obtained. An outlet for the surplus capital would have been found and, since wages in these undeveloped countries were very low, high profits would follow. At the same time, the home industries would be kept supplied with their life-blood—the raw materials. Once again the developed capitalist countries began a simultaneous search for areas where they could invest their surplus capital.

Imperialism and expansion also served at this stage an important ideological and political purpose in the imperialist countries. The second half of the 19th century witnessed a powerful

upsurge of democratic sentiments among the masses and the right to vote was extended to them in nearly all the West European countries and the U.S.A. The ruling upper-classes of these countries were worried that the workers and peasants would use this right to promote their own class interests and that the days of the political and economic domination of society by the upper-classes were drawing to an end. Imperialism provided a way out. It could be used to deflect popular attention towards external glory, to spread extreme nationalist, patriotic and self-glorifying sentiments among the people, and thus to cement their societies once again round capitalism. The British raised the slogan that 'the Sun never sets on the British empire' to spread pride and a sense of contentment among workers on whose slum dwellings the sun seldom shone in real life. The Germans rallied round the demand for 'a place under the Sun'. The French had their own faith in a 'Civilising Mission'. Japan soon claimed to be the saviour of Asia, and Russia of the Slavs. The North Americans claimed Latin America to be under their trusteeship where they had a 'Manifest Destiny'. They were soon to start believing that the 20th century was the 'American Century'. Ideologies of expansion, imperialism, and national greatness led people to put the same types of governments in power through their popular vote as had been ruling them before they got the right to vote. All these new factors and forces led towards the same result—a hunt for exclusive colonies and semi-colonies, where the imperialist country concerned could exercise exclusive domination over markets, raw materials and investments. The competition for colonies and semi-colonies became increasingly intense and bitter as areas open to fresh colonial domination became scarce. The struggle for division of the world into colonies was now transformed into a struggle for the redivision of the colonial world.

This entire period was one of stress and strain for Britain, because the newcomers among the developed capitalist countries assailed its prominent position in the fields of trade and investment. It now began a vigorous effort to consolidate its control over its existing empire and to extend it further.

In India, the third stage of British rule was marked by a renewed upsurge of imperialist control which was reflected in the reactionary policies associated with the viceroyalties of Lytton, Dufferin, Lansdowne and, above all, Curzon. Faced with intense competition the world over, the British looked upon India as a place where British capital could hope to maintain a haven.

After 1850, a very large amount of British capital was invested in railways, loans to the Indian Government, and to a smaller extent in tea plantations, coal mining, jute mills, shipping, trade and banking. It was necessary that to render this capital secure from economic and political dangers, British rule over India be clamped down even more firmly. This was frankly recognised by contemporary British officials and statesmen. Thus, Richard Temple, civil servant and Governor of Bombay, wrote in 1880 that England "must keep India...because a vast amount of British capital has been sunk in the country, on the assurance of British rule being, humanly speaking, perpetual".

India also performed another important function in the British scheme for empire. The Indian army was the chief instrument for the expansion and consolidation of British power in Africa and Asia. It also served along with the British navy as the chief instrument for the defence of the British empire on a global scale. The result was a costly standing army that absorbed nearly 52 per cent of the Indian revenues in 1904.

All talk of educating Indians for self-government died out during this period, till it was revived in 1918 under the impact of the Indian national movement. Instead, the aim of British rule was declared to be permanent 'trusteeship' or 'benevolent

despotism' over India. It was said that because of geographical, racial, historical, social and cultural factors the Indian people had become permanently unfit for self-government. The British had, therefore, to provide them with 'civilised' and 'benevolent' rule for centuries to come.

The transformation of India, begun during the preceding period, continued during the third stage. It became even more important that British administration should reach out to every nook and corner of India and the Indian society, and that every port and every town and village be linked with the world economy for Britain's profit. But, as before, this transformation remained severely limited or partial. This was so for reasons inherent in the nature of British colonialism in India.

Firstly, the cost of administrative, economic and cultural changes had to be met from the Indian revenues, just as earlier the cost of British conquest had been met from Indian revenues. But India was a poor country and colonialism impoverished it further. While an economically developing country could easily provide increasing revenues, in India such an increase involved a higher level of taxation. There were, however, obvious political limits to this process. Growing taxation in a stagnant economy invariably carries with it the penalty of popular revolt. Moreover, India could not simultaneously pay for the costly administrative and military structure and the development of education, irrigation, the transport system, and modern industries. This was, in fact, one of the central contradictions of colonialism in India. While further extension of colonial exploitation required some internal development, the very process of this exploitation made further extension impossible by keeping India backward.

Secondly, the colonial authorities were led to put checks on the process of modernisation in India when they observed its consequences. Even a limited amount of change produced social group forces that began to oppose imperialism and the mechanism

of its exploitation of India. The colonial authorities were, therefore, caught on the horns of another dilemma : the very transformation needed to make India a paying colony endangered colonial rule by producing at the same time the social forces of nationalism that organised a struggle against colonialism.

BASIC FEATURES OF COLONIALISM IN INDIA

As a result of British rule, India was transformed by the end of the 19th century into a classic colony. It was a major market for British manufactures, a big source of raw materials and food-stuffs, and an important field for the investment of British capital. Its agriculture was highly taxed for the benefit of imperial interests. The bulk of the transport system, modern mines and industries, foreign trade, coastal and international shipping, and banks and insurance companies were all under foreign control. India provided employment to thousands of middle-class Englishmen and nearly one-third of its revenues was spent in paying salaries to Englishmen. The Indian army acted as the chief instrument for maintaining the far-flung British empire and protecting and promoting British imperial interests in East, South-East, Central and West Asia and North, East and South Africa.

Above all, Indian economy and social development were completely subordinated to British economy and social development. Indian economy was integrated into the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position and with a peculiar international division of labour. During the very years after 1760 when Britain was developing into the leading developed, capitalist country of the world, India was being underdeveloped into becoming the 'leading' backward, colonial country of the world. In fact, the two processes were interdependent in terms

of cause and effect. The entire structure of economic relations between Britain and India involving trade, finance and technology continuously developed India's colonial dependence and underdevelopment.

IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

British rule and its impact on India created conditions for the rise of a powerful anti-imperialist movement and for unification of the Indian people into a nation. The selfish policies followed by the British rulers in India affected most India's agriculture and her agrarian classes and her trade and industries. The impact of the policies in the cultural and social fields was also very powerful.

The British brought about a most important transformation in India's agricultural economy but this was not with a view to improving Indian agriculture to increase production and ensure the welfare and prosperity of the Indians involved in agriculture, but to obtain for themselves in the form of land revenue all surplus available in agriculture and to force Indian agriculture to play its assigned role in a colonial economy. Old relationships and institutions were destroyed and new ones were born. But these new features did not represent a change towards modernisation or in the right direction.

The British introduced two major land revenue and tenurial systems. One was the Zamindari system. (Later, a modified version of the same Zamindari system was introduced in North India under the name of the Mahalwari system.) The other was the Ryotwari system.

Under the Zamindari system, old tax farmers, revenue collectors, and zamindars were turned into private landlords possessing some, but not all, of the rights of private property in

land. For one, the bulk of the rent they derived from the tenants was to be turned over to the Government. At the same time, they were made complete masters of the village communities. The peasant cultivators were transformed into tenants-at-will.

Under the Ryotwari system the Government collected the revenues direct from the individual cultivators, who were recognised in law as the owners of the land they cultivated. But their right of ownership too was limited by the temporary nature of the land revenue settlements, and by the high rate of revenue demanded, which often they could not pay.

Whatever the name of the system, it was the peasant cultivators who suffered. They were forced to pay very high rents and for all practical purposes functioned as tenants-at-will. They were compelled to pay many illegal dues and cesses and were often required to perform forced labour or *begar*. What is more important, whatever the name or nature of the revenue system, in effect the Government came to occupy the position of the landlord. Much later, especially after 1901, revenue rates were gradually reduced but by then the agrarian economy had been ruined to such an extent and the landlords, moneylenders, and merchants had made such deep inroads into the village that it was of no practical use to the peasant cultivators themselves.

The greatest evil that arose out of the British policies with regard to Indian agricultural economy was the emergence of the moneylender as an influential economic and political force in the country. Because of the high revenue rates demanded and the rigid manner of collection, the peasant cultivator had often to borrow money to pay taxes. In addition to paying exorbitant interest, when his crops were ready he was invariably forced to sell his produce cheap. The chronic poverty of the peasant compelled him to take recourse to the moneylender especially in times of droughts, floods and famines. The

moneylender, on the other hand, could manipulate the new judicial system and the administrative machinery to his advantage. In this regard the Government, in fact, actually helped him, because without him the land revenue could not be collected in time, nor could the agricultural produce be brought to the ports for export. Even to get the commercial crops for export produced in the first instance, the Government depended on the moneylender to persuade the cultivator by offering to finance him through loans. It is not surprising, therefore, that in course of time the moneylender began to occupy a dominant position in the rural economy. In both the Zamindari and the Ryotwari areas there occurred a large-scale transfer of land from the hands of the actual cultivators to the hands of moneylenders, merchants, officials and rich peasants. This led to landlordism becoming the dominant feature of land relationships all over the country.

Intermediate rent receivers also grew. This process is referred to as sub-infeudation. The new landlords and zamindars had even less of a link with land than the old zamindars. Instead of taking the trouble to organise a machinery for rent collection, they merely sublet their rights to intermediate rent receivers.

The impact of British rule thus led to the evolution of a new structure of agrarian relations that was extremely regressive. The new system did not at all permit the development of agriculture. New social classes appeared at the top as well as at the bottom of the social scale. There arose landlords, intermediaries and moneylenders at the top and tenants-at-will, share-croppers and agricultural labourers at the bottom. The new pattern was neither capitalism nor feudalism, nor was it a continuation of the old Mughal arrangement. It was a new structure that colonialism evolved. It was semi-feudal and semi-colonial in character.

The most unfortunate result of all this was that absolutely no effort was made either to improve agricultural practices or develop them along modern lines for increased production. Agricultural practices remained unchanged. Better types of implements, good seeds and various types of manures and fertilizers were not introduced at all. The poverty-stricken peasant cultivators did not have the resources to improve agriculture, the landlords had no incentive to do so, and the colonial Government behaved like a typical landlord; it was interested only in extracting high revenues and did not take any steps to modernise and improve and develop Indian agriculture.

The result was prolonged stagnation in agricultural production. Agricultural statistics are available only for the 20th century; and here the picture was quite dismal. While overall agricultural production per head fell by 14 per cent between 1901 and 1939, the fall in the per capita production of food grains was over 24 per cent. Most of this decline occurred after 1918.

IMPACT ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY

As with agriculture, the British Indian Government controlled trade and industry purely with a view to foster British interests. India, no doubt, underwent under the impact of colonialism a commercial revolution, which integrated it with the world market, but she was forced to occupy a subordinate position. Foreign trade took big strides forward especially after 1858, increasing from Rs. 15 crores in 1834 to Rs. 60 crores in 1858 and Rs. 213 crores in 1899. It reached a peak of Rs. 758 crores in 1924. But this growth did not represent a positive feature in Indian economy nor did it contribute to the welfare of the Indian people, because it was used as the chief instrument through which the Indian economy was made colonial and

dependent on world capitalism. The growth of the Indian foreign trade was neither natural nor normal; it was artificially fostered to serve imperialism. The composition and character of the foreign trade was unbalanced. The country was flooded with manufactured goods from Britain and forced to produce and export the raw materials Britain and other foreign countries needed.

Last but not least, the foreign trade affected the internal distribution of income adversely. The British policy only helped to transfer resources from peasants and craftsmen to merchants, moneylenders and foreign capitalists.

A significant feature of India's foreign trade during this period was the constant excess of exports over imports. We should not, however, imagine that it was to India's advantage. These exports did not represent the future claims of India on foreign countries, but the drain of India's wealth and resources. We must also remember that the bulk of foreign trade was in foreign hands and that almost all of it was carried on through foreign ships.

One of the most important consequences of British rule was the progressive decline and destruction of urban and rural handicraft industries. Not only did India lose its foreign markets in Asia and Europe, but even the Indian market was flooded with cheap machine-made goods produced on a mass scale. The collapse of indigenous handicrafts followed.

The ruin of the indigenous industries and the absence of other avenues of employment forced millions of craftsmen to crowd into agriculture. Thus, the pressure of population on land increased.

DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN INDUSTRIES

British rule created conditions for the rise of a modern capitalist industry. It created a wider all-India market by build-

ing a country-wide transport system. In India a long-standing union had existed between rural industries and agriculture. But because the domestic rural production pattern including the handicraft industries had been destroyed or seriously disrupted, the relationship between rural industries and agriculture snapped. Millions of craftsmen had been thrown out of employment. The new revenue system had deprived millions of cultivators of their land. Both these led to the creation of a free labour force. These labourers had no other way of making a living except by hiring out their services for daily wages. Thus two of the basic requirements for the rise of a modern capitalist industry, namely, an all-India market and an abundance of cheap labour, were met. The establishment of modern industries followed during the second half of the 19th century.

Industrial development in India until the beginning of the 20th century was mainly confined to four industries, namely, cotton and jute textiles, coal mining and tea plantations. A few other minor industries such as cotton gins and presses, rice, flour and timber mills, leather tanneries, woollen textiles, paper and sugar mills, and salt, mica, saltpetre, petroleum and iron mines were developed. A few engineering and railway workshops and iron and brass foundries also came into existence.

From these facts we must not imagine that the foundations for an industrial revolution were being laid. Far from it. First of all, most of the modern industries that did develop were controlled by foreign capitalists. Second, though the industrial progress during this phase was steady and continuous, it was extremely slow. Compared to the vastness of the country and its population then, the efforts at industrialisation were so marginal that even the term industrialisation appears to be inappropriate. Even by 1913 the total number of workers covered by the Factory Act was less than one million.

The First World War and the depression during the 1930s provided the Indian capitalist class the opportunity to make its first tentative spurts forward. There was no competition from foreign imports and the Government was also compelled to place large orders with Indian industrialists, merchants and contractors. But though the Indian capitalist made phenomenal profits during this period, the industries soon entered a period of stagnation as the war came to an end and foreign competition was resumed.

Thus, it will be seen that industrial development in India till 1947 was slow and stunted and did not at all represent an industrial revolution or even the initiation of one. What was more important, even the limited development was not independent but was under the control of foreign capital. Secondly, the structure of industry was such as to make its further development dependent on Britain. There was almost a complete absence of heavy capital goods and chemical industries without which rapid and autonomous industrial development could hardly occur. Machine-tool, engineering and metallurgical industries were virtually non-existent. Moreover, India was entirely dependent on the imperialist world in the field of technology. No technological research was carried on in the country.

To sum up, India underwent a commercial transformation and not an industrial revolution. The trend was not towards an independent industrial capitalist economy but towards a dependent and underdeveloped colonial economy. There was another negative aspect to India's industrial progress under British rule. The distribution of industries was extremely lop-sided and concentrated in a few regions and cities of the country. Even irrigation and electrical power facilities were very unevenly distributed. This gave rise to wide regional disparities in income patterns, of economic development, and social stratification.

A major consequence of British rule in India was the pre-

valence of extreme poverty among its people most of whom lived below the margin of subsistence in normal times and died in lakhs when droughts or floods hit the land. The per capita income was low and unemployment widespread. Dadabhai Naoroji showed in 1880 that nearly 50 per cent more was spent on feeding and clothing a criminal in an Indian jail than was the average income of an Indian. This poverty resulted in poor health, low life expectancy and infant mortality. The poverty of the people found its visible manifestation in the series of famines which ravaged the country during the second half of the 19th century. Twenty of the years from 1860 to 1908 were years of famine. According to one estimate, nearly 29 million people died during famines from 1854 to 1901. These famines revealed that poverty and chronic starvation had taken firm roots in colonial India.

The poverty of India was not a product of its geography or of the lack of natural resources or of some 'inherent' defect in the character and capabilities of the people. Nor was it a remnant of the Mughal period or of the pre-British past. It was mainly a product of the history of the last two centuries. Before that India was no more backward than the countries of Western Europe. Nor were the differences in standards of living at the time very wide among the countries of the world. Precisely during the period the countries of the West developed and prospered, India was subjected to modern colonialism and was prevented from developing. All the developed countries of today developed almost entirely over the period during which India was ruled by Britain, most of them doing so after 1850. Till 1750 the differences in living standards were not wide between the different parts of the world. It is interesting, in this connection, to note that the dates of the beginnings of the industrial revolution in Britain and the British conquest of Bengal virtually coincide !

The basic fact is that the same social, political and economic

processes that produced industrial development and social and cultural progress in Britain, also produced and then maintained economic underdevelopment and social and cultural backwardness in India. The reason for this is obvious. Britain subordinated the Indian economy to its own economy and determined the basic social trends in India according to her own needs. The result was stagnation of India's agriculture and industries, exploitation of its peasants and workers by the zamindars, landlords, princes, moneylenders, merchants, capitalists, and the foreign government and its officials, and the spread of poverty, disease, and semi-starvation.

IMPACT IN THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL FIELDS

Along with British rule also came a link with the West; and modern ideas which were first developed in Western Europe made their entry into India. Even if the British had never come to India, this country would not have remained cut-off from all the changes that were taking place in the West in the 18th and 19th centuries. The winds of change would certainly have reached our shores, because India had never followed a closed-door policy. Through trade and travel she had for centuries established channels of communication not only with the countries of Asia but also with Europe. Through these sources news of events and happennings in Europe and elsewhere and details of the new thinking taking place in the West were already reaching India in the 18th century. But it might have been a slow process spread over a long period of time. British rule not only hastened their arrival in India but the very nature of the foreign domination quickened these influences with a local meaning charged with immediacy and relevance.

The intellectual life of the Indian people began to undergo

revolutionary changes influenced by such ideas as democracy and sovereignty of the people, rationalism and humanism. These new ideas helped Indians not only to take a critical look at their own society, economy and government, but also to understand the true nature of British imperialism in India.

Modern ideas spread through many channels: political parties, the Press, pamphlets and the public platform. The spread of modern education introduced in India after 1813 by the Government, the missionaries and private Indian efforts also played an important role. This role is, however, complex and full of contradictions.

For one, the spread of modern education was very limited. For nearly one hundred years it failed even to compensate for the ruin of the traditional educational system. If the foreign government neglected primary and school education, it turned hostile to higher education early, that is, soon after 1858. As many of the educated Indians began to use their recently acquired modern knowledge to analyse and criticise the imperialist and exploitative character of British rule and to organise an anti-imperialist political movement, the British administrators began to press continuously for the curtailment of higher education. The Government, of course, failed in its efforts to check the growth of higher education, because, once started, popular pressure kept it going even though there was a continuous deterioration in the quality of education.

If the educational system acted as the carrier of nationalism it did so indirectly by making available to its recipients some of the basic literature in the physical and social sciences and the humanities and thus stimulating their capacity to make social analysis. Otherwise its structure and pattern, aims, methods, curricula and content were all designed to serve colonialism.

A few other aspects of Indian education arising out of its colonial character should be noted. One was the complete neglect

of modern technical education which was a basic necessity for the rise and development of modern industry. Another was the emphasis on English as the medium of instruction in place of the Indian languages. This not only prevented the spread of education to the masses but also created a wide linguistic and cultural gulf between the educated and the masses. Government's refusal to allocate adequate funds for education gradually reduced the educational standards to an extremely low level. And because the students had to pay fees in schools and colleges, education became a virtual monopoly of the middle- and upper-classes and the city- and town-dwellers.

New ideas, a new economic and political life, and British rule produced a deep impact on the social life of the Indian people that was first felt in the urban areas and which later penetrated to the villages. Modern industries, new means of transport, growing urbanisation and increasing employment of women in factories, offices, hospitals and schools promoted social change. Social exclusiveness and caste rigidities were eroded. The total disruption of old land and rural relationships upset the caste balance in the countryside. Though many of the evils persisted, the penetration of capitalism made social status dependent mainly on money and profit-making became the most desirable social activity.

In the beginning the policies of the colonial state also encouraged social reform. Efforts were made to modernise Indian society in order to enable the economic penetration of the country and the consolidation of British rule. To some extent, the humanitarian instincts of some of the officials aroused by the glaring social injustices enshrined in the Indian caste system and the low status of women in society also played a role. The Christian missionaries also contributed towards the reform of Indian society at this stage. But very soon the basic conservative character and long-term interests of colonialism asserted them-

selves and colonial policies towards social reform were changed. The British, therefore, withdrew their support from the reformers and gradually came to side with the socially orthodox and conservative elements of society.

The social policy followed by the British, however, did not remain passive. In order to meet the growing challenge of nationalism, the rulers increasingly followed the policy of divide and rule and actively encouraged communalism and casteism which, in turn, strengthened the reactionary social forces.

The new intellectual and political stirrings among the people also led to movements for social change. But the most powerful forces for social change arose when the lower castes and women themselves became conscious of their depressed condition and began to struggle for the re-modelling of society. Led by men such as Jotiba Phule the lower castes built up powerful movements from the end of the 19th century. Similarly, the lower castes in Kerala and other parts of South India organised themselves during the 1920's and 1930's to fight against the socio-economic oppression by the upper castes. Women and tribal people too rose in defence of their rights. In order to mobilise all the people in the struggle against imperialism, the national movement became committed to the goals of abolishing all distinctions and disparities based on caste, sex or religion. Moreover, common participation in demonstrations, public meetings, popular movements, trade unions and *kisan sabhas* weakened notions of caste and male superiority.

The modernisation of Indian culture had one other important facet. While the orthodox and socially reactionary sections of the Indian society opposed the introduction of modern culture in order to preserve their threatened social and cultural position, certain sections of the middle- and upper-class Indians suffered from the opposite tendency. They blindly imitated Western life and culture instead of carefully assimilating their positive,

humanist, and scientific features. They aped European manners and customs not realising that modernity was more a question of approach, of thinking, of values, and not of manners of speech, or dress, or eating habits. They did not realise that modern ideas and culture could be best imbibed by integrating them into Indian culture.

Once again, the roots of this phenomenon went back to colonial policies. In order to make Indians better customers for their goods and more loyal subjects of the Raj, the British made every effort to impose on India, the colony, the culture of Britain, the metropolis.

British writers and statesmen also used their criticism of Indian culture and society to justify British political and economic domination over India. They declared that because of their inherent social and cultural defects Indians were destined to be ruled perpetually by foreign masters. Both these factors produced a strong reaction in India. Many Indians felt it necessary to prove their 'fitness' for self-government by glorifying their remote past. Others held up the imitators of Western culture to ridicule and opposed the very introduction of modern ideas and culture. They believed that the best way to preserve cultural autonomy was to look inwards once again. Even though this trend of thought remained in a minority, it had a certain influence over the people, especially the urban lower-middle classes.

British rule brought the entire geographical area of the country under a single administration. It also unified the country by introducing a uniform system of law and government. The introduction of modern methods of communication like railways, telegraphs, a modern postal system, development of roads and motor transport produced the same unifying effect. The destruction of rural and local economic self-sufficiency and the growth of internal trade created conditions for the rise of a unified Indian economy. Modern industries were all-India in their scope for

both the sources of their raw materials and their markets embraced the entire country. Even their labour force was recruited on a wide inter-regional basis. Increasingly the economic lot of the Indian people was getting inter-linked and India's economic life was becoming a single whole. A common pattern of education and the acquisition of modern ideas by the people all over the country also gradually gave birth to an all-India intelligentsia with a common approach and common ways of looking at society. Similarly, the two new classes born in this period, namely, the capitalist class and the working class, were all-India in character and stood above the traditional divisions of caste, region and religion.

In addition to all this, the very existence of a common enemy that oppressed all the Indian people irrespective of their social class, caste, religion or region, bound them together as one. In its turn the anti-imperialist struggle and the feeling of solidarity born in its course provided the emotional and psychological bond that knit the people together and led to the emergence of a common national outlook.

INDIAN SOCIAL GROUPS AND CLASSES AND BRITISH RULE

With the passage of time the impact of the British Raj emerged in clearer outline and the clash and contradiction between the aims and objectives of British rule and the interests of the Indian people became clear and obvious. More and more Indians realised that the British ruled India to promote their own interests, that in doing so they did not hesitate to sacrifice Indian interests to those of the British nation in general and those of British capitalists in particular, and that colonialism had become the major cause of India's economic, social, cultural and political backwardness. Different classes and groups of

Indian society gradually discovered that British rule was hampering their development in all basic aspects.

The peasantry was perhaps the chief victim of British colonialism. The Government took away a large part of its produce in the form of land revenue and other taxes. It was soon caught in the firm clutches of the landlord and the moneylender. The peasant found himself master neither of his land nor of the crops he produced; not even of his own labour power. And when the peasants organised political and economic struggles against the zamindars, landlords and moneylenders, the Government brought into action against them the entire police and judicial machinery in the name of law and order and often brutally suppressed their struggles. In time the peasants became aware of the role of imperialism and saw that it was in the main responsible for their plight.

The artisans and craftsmen had also suffered much at the hands of imperialism. Their centuries-old sources of livelihood had been taken away without the development of any new, compensating avenues of employment. Their condition was extremely precarious and wretched by the end of the 19th century. Consequently, they took a very active part in the anti-imperialist struggles of the twentieth century.

With the growth of modern industries was born a new social class in India—the working class. Though tiny in number and forming a very small part of the population, this class represented a new social outlook. It did not have to carry the burden of centuries of tradition, customs, and ways of life. Its outlook and interests were from the beginning all-India in character. Moreover, the workers were concentrated in factories and cities. All these factors gave their political actions a significance far greater than their numbers would suggest.

Indian workers worked and lived under highly unsatisfactory conditions. Till 1911 there were no regulatory provisions con-

cerning their hours of work. There did not exist any kind of social insurance against sickness, old age, unemployment, accident or sudden death. There were no provident fund schemes. And a maternity benefit scheme, though a highly unsatisfactory one, came into operation only in the 1930s.

Real wages of factory workers declined during the period 1889 to 1929 and it was only after the development of a militant trade union movement that they rose in the 1930s to the level prevailing between 1880 and 1890, and this when labour productivity went up by more than 50 per cent. The result was that the average worker lived below the margin of subsistence. Summing up the conditions of the Indian workers under British rule, Prof Jurgen Kuczyaski, the well-known German economic historian, wrote in 1938 : "Underfed, housed like animals, without light and air and water, the Indian industrial worker is one of the most exploited of all in the world of industrial capitalism."

Conditions in the tea and coffee plantations were even worse. These plantations were situated in thinly populated areas with an unhealthy climate, but the planters would not pay adequate wages to attract labour from outside. Instead, they used false promises and fraud to recruit labour, and coercion and violence—physical torture being a common method—to keep them on the plantation as virtual slaves. The Government gave them full help and passed penal laws to enable them to keep the plantation workers under oppressive subjugation.

In course of time the Indian working class came to adopt a militant anti-imperialist approach.

Another major social section of the population that came to form the backbone of the nationalist movement was that of the middle- and lower-middle classes. New opportunities had opened to these groups in the first half of the 19th century when the British recruited an entire army of petty Government servants and by opening new schools and law courts created new jobs and

professions. Also, the sudden growth in internal and foreign trade led to the expansion of the merchant class at all levels. But the logic of an underdeveloped colonial economy soon asserted itself. By the end of the 19th century, even the limited number of educated Indians—fewer in the whole of India than at present in a small territory such as Delhi—were faced with growing unemployment. Moreover, even those who found jobs discovered that most of the better-paid jobs were reserved for the English middle- and upper-classes. In particular, employment prospects became increasingly bleak for those who were forced to drop out from the universities without getting a B.A. degree. The middle- and lower middle-class Indians soon realised that only a country that was economically developing and socially and culturally modern could provide them economic and cultural opportunities to lead a worthwhile and meaningful life and, above all, save them from rapid impoverishment, unemployment, and loss of socio-economic status.

The Indian industrial capitalist class developed after 1858. It soon entered into competition with the British capitalists and realised that its growth was checked by the official trade, tariff, transport, and financial policies of the Government. While struggling for independent eonomic growth, it came into conflict with imperialism on almost every basic economic issue.

The Indian capitalist class needed active and direct Government help to compensate it for its initial weakness and handicap in competing with the firmly established industries of Western Europe. The contemporary industries of France, Germany and Japan were being developed with active and massive Government help. Such help was denied to Indian capitalists. Most of all Indian industry needed tariff protection so that cheaper foreign goods would not outsell its products. Such protection was not given; instead, free trade was introduced more completely than in any other country of the world.

A sympathetic bureaucracy could have helped and assisted the Indian capitalists in innumerable ways. In Western Europe the bureaucracy was as pro-capitalist in outlook as the capitalist class itself. Hundreds of links bound the two together. In India, the higher bureaucracy was foreign. It dined and wined with British capitalists. Its natural sympathy lay with its compatriots and their industrial ambitions whether in Britain or in India. On the other hand, it was unsympathetic and even hostile to Indian industrial efforts.

The Indian capitalists feared above all domination and suppression by the far stronger foreign capital. Their instinct for survival was in particular aroused after 1918 when a large-scale inflow of foreign capital investment into Indian industry began to occur and the giant British industrial corporations started forming subsidiaries in India in order to take advantage of the tariff protection granted during the 1920's and 1930's, the cheaper Indian labour, and the nearness of the market. The Indian capitalists now raised the slogan, 'Indian domination of Indian markets'.

The Indian capitalists thus increasingly found themselves in open contradiction with the colonial economic structure, administrative machinery and policies. They gradually realised that they needed a nation-state and a government favourable to indigenous capitalists. The rapid development of Indian trade and industry could not occur so long as foreign imperialism dominated the country. Of course, as men of property and members of a weak though developing class, they did not immediately come into open and direct confrontation with the foreign rulers on whom they depended for so many administrative favours. But after 1918 they began to support, mostly financially, the rapidly developing nationalist movement and individual nationalist leaders.

The most important and creative role in the rise of

nationalism was played by the modern Indian intelligentsia. It was the first social group in the country to recognise the fact that the establishment of British power in India marked a sharp break with the past and the beginning of a new historical era. Its initial response to British rule was very positive. In the beginning of the 19th century, men such as Raja Rammohun Roy had clearly seen that blind patriotism would not do, that the causes of the defeat of such a vast country as India by a handful of foreigners lay in the weakness of its internal social, economic, political and intellectual make-up, and that Britain did at the time represent a superior culture and civilisation. They made a frank and ruthless analysis of the contemporary Indian social set-up and organisation which, they said, could not serve as the basis for the future development of India. They, therefore, set out to modernise their society and country.

In the economic realm they were attracted by modern industry and the prospects of economic development and prosperity. They hoped that Britain, economically the most advanced country of the time, would introduce modern science and technology and economic organisation in its dependencies, including India. In the political realm they were attracted by modern thought and the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people leading to democracy, freedom of speech, the Press, association and the right to publicly criticise the rulers. They also witnessed before their very eyes the process of the unification of India and the welding of the Indian people into one common nation. They hoped that Britain would help to complete the process. As opposed to faith, they were attracted by the force of modern rationalism. They also began to see that literature and the arts must be made popular and no longer cater only to the élite. For this purpose they advocated the spread of modern education through the

medium of the English language, on the one hand, and the development of modern Indian languages, on the other. In the social field, they were attracted by social liberty and the humanistic conception of society and the individual that every individual should be prized for his own sake.

Thus for nearly half a century, the modern Indian intellectuals believed that the re-shaping and transforming of Indian society could and would occur under British rule, because Britain was the most advanced country of the time. Consequently, they supported British rule and even described it as 'providential'. This support they gave even during the Revolt of 1857.

However, in time, gradual and general disillusionment set in when developments during the first three-quarters of the 19th century did not bear out their expectations in any field. They now began to see that their expectations were misplaced and were based on a wrong understanding of the nature and character of British rule.

Thus, in practice, the British did not transfer modern technology and industry to India. The series of devastating famines that held India in their grip from 1866 to 1901 shattered the day-dreams of 'guided' development and brought home to the intellectuals the stark poverty of the people and the process of the economic underdevelopment of the country. They realised that so long as the imperialist control of the Indian economy continued India would not be able to develop economically; that instead it will continue to underdevelop further. In the political field, British officials and political leaders had discarded the slogan of training Indians for self-government and declared that the political aim of British rule was to establish a permanent 'benevolent despotism'. Indians, they said, were 'unfit' for self-government or democracy. Freedom of the Press which had so attracted the Indian intelligentsia soon began to be

tampered with. Even elementary civil rights, the freedom of thought, speech and association were increasingly violated and restricted. Law and order which had earlier appeared to them as the prime condition for peaceful development and modernisation increasingly became a strait jacket on political and economic protest. Far from completing the unification of India and its flowering into a single nation, the British tried to maintain their hold over the country by setting into motion the divisive forces of communalism, casteism and regionalism and by bolstering up the decadent princely order. In the cultural field the Indian intellectuals noted that the progressive impulse had withered rather quickly. The British Indian Government spent less than three per cent of its budget on education, completely neglected the education of the masses and women, and turned hostile to higher education and the spread of modern ideas. After 1858 the British rulers abandoned all attempts at social reform and began to ally themselves with the most backward, traditional, obscurantist, cultural, religious and social forces.

Consequently, the modern Indian intellectual began the hard task of examining and understanding afresh the basic character of British rule. Their understanding took time to develop. But by the end of the 19th century, they had come to realise that what had appeared to them earlier as the modernisation of India was in fact its colonialisation. They now set out to build up a nationalist political movement against imperialism.

Three other social groups—the zamindars, landlords, and princes, the higher bureaucracy (the Indians in the higher cadres of government service), and the traditional intelligentsia—had an unsure, two-sided attitude to imperialism. The zamindars, landlords and princes were as a class loyal to foreign rule since their interests coincided with those of the rulers. Similarly, the Indian members of the higher bureaucracy shared with the rulers the benefits of a high standard of living in a poor country and

the feel of administrative power and high social status. They remained by and large loyal instruments of British rule to the end. But even from these two social strata many individuals joined the national movement moved by the prevailing spirit of patriotism.

The traditional intelligentsia consisting of religious thinkers, functionaries, and preachers and teachers in the traditional educational system was torn by conflicting pulls. Their conservative social and religious outlook inclined them towards political conservatism. They had also a long historical tradition of loyalty to the powers that be. At the same time most of the traditional intelligentsia at the lower levels suffered a sharp decline when the spread of modern schools and colleges led to the closure of the traditional *pathashalas*, *madrasas*, and the traditional centres of higher learning. Many of the traditional intellectuals were also bitterly hostile to modern culture and thought and the religious and social reform movements, both on ideological grounds and because they undermined their own hold over society. The aggressive proselytising propaganda of the Christian missionaries also aroused their anger.

The result was that in the end two opposite trends emerged among the traditional intellectuals. The followers of one trend favoured actively joining the national movement while maintaining their aversion to modern ideas; the followers of the other trend supported the foreign rulers in the hope of maintaining their traditionally dominant position in society. The Government actively encouraged the latter trend.

That left the control of temples, *maths*, mosques, *dargahs*, gurudwaras, and other religious institutions firmly and undisturbed in the hands of the traditional intelligentsia. The Government also began to extend patronage to the traditional intelligentsia through pensions, financial rewards and bestowal of titles and honours. It also now took steps to keep alive artificially the

traditional educational system. As we have seen earlier, it also abandoned the policy of social and cultural reform and thus acquired respectability in the eyes of the orthodox. In order to prevent the spread of modern ideas of nationalism, democracy, and economic development, the British even propagated the view that the traditional ideas and institutions of India suited them well and that Indians should concentrate on their philosophic and religious heritage and the so-called 'spiritual' aspects of their life, leaving the British to manage their economy and politics and administration. This division of labour also attracted the traditional intelligentsia.

Another major factor that aroused all Indian princes and paupers, zamindars and tenants, the higher bureaucrats and the clerks, the rich and the poor to nationalist fervour was the exhibition of racial arrogance by the rulers. The British in India had always kept their distance from Indians and felt themselves to be racially superior. But a qualitative change occurred during the second half of the 19th century when the social and racial gulf between the two was widened. A wave of racialist doctrines preaching the inherent superiority of the whites over the blacks spread over Europe as a part of the resurgence of imperialism and imperialist ideologies. The British in India now openly proclaimed that Indians were an inferior race and asserted the privileges of an occupying power. Even such a high personage as Mayo, the Viceroy, wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab in 1870 : "Teach your subordinates that we are all British gentlemen engaged in the magnificent work of governing an inferior race." At this brazen display of racial arrogance every thinking and self-respecting Indian felt insulted and humiliated and was aroused to nationalist activity.

To sum up, the basic colonial character of British rule and its harmful impact on the lives of the Indian people led to the rise and development of a powerful anti-imperialist movement in

India. This movement was a national movement because it embraced within its fold all the different classes and groups of Indian society. These classes and groups had their own contradictions with imperialism which brought them together in a common national movement. There also existed mutual clashes of interests among them. But they sank their mutual differences and united against the common enemy.

II THE EARLY PHASE

TRADITIONAL RESISTANCE

THE INDIAN PEOPLE resisted British rule in India from its very inception. Hardly a year passed till 1857 when some part of the country or the other was not convulsed by armed rebellion. This continuous resistance, wholly traditional in character, took three broad forms : civil rebellions, tribal uprisings, and peasant movements and uprisings.

Civil Rebellions

The process of the British conquest of India and the consolidation of British rule was accompanied by serious discontent and resentment among the people. Even the Indian soldiers serving in the British Indian army were affected. For nearly 100 years popular discontent took the form of armed resistance led by the deposed chieftains or their descendants and relations, zamindars and poligars, and ex-soldiers, officials and other retainers of the Indian States. Large sections of the peasantry and artisans joined these revolts, because of their own grievances and hardships, often forming the backbone of these revolts. These civil rebellions began with the very establishment of British rule in Bengal and Bihar. Intensification of the land revenue demand, exploitation of the artisans by the East India Company and its servants, and the uprooting of old zamindars

created an explosive situation. Popular revolts occurred in almost every district and province.

The demobilised soldiers and displaced peasants of Bengal participated in the famous Sanyasi rebellion led by religious monks and dispossessed zamindars. The Sanyasi rebellion lasted from 1763 to 1800. Then came the Chuar uprising covering five districts of Bengal and Bihar and lasting from 1766 to 1772. Another Chuar outburst occurred from 1795 to 1816.

Extension of the British power to other parts of the country led to similar revolts. The rebellion of Orissa zamindars lasted from 1804 to 1817. In South India, the Raja of Vizianagaram revolted in 1794. The poligars of Tamil Nadu revolted during the 1790's, of Malabar and Dindigal in 1801, of coastal Andhra from 1801-05, and those of Parlakimedi from 1813 to 1834. Mysoreans rebelled in 1800 and then again in 1831. The Vizagapatam Uprising broke out during 1830-34. Diwan Velu Tampi of Travancore rebelled in 1805. In Western India the chiefs of Saurashtra revolted repeatedly from 1816-32. The Kolis of Gujarat did the same in 1824-25, 1828, 1839, and 1849. There were numerous uprisings in Maharashtra. Maharashtra was, in fact, in perpetual revolt. The Kittur Uprising (1824-29). the Kolahpur Uprising (1824), the Satara Uprising (1841), and the revolt of Gadkaris (1844) may be mentioned in particular. Northern India was no less turbulent. The Jats of western U.P. and Haryana created serious disturbances in 1824. Other prominent rebellions were those of the Rajputs of Bilaspur in 1805, the Taluqdars of Aligarh in 1814-17, and the Bundelas of Jabalpur in 1842.

These rebellions, running like a thread through the history of the first 100 years of British rule in India, were based on the traditional links and loyalties between the peasants and the zamindars and the petty chieftains. They were wholly local and isolated in character. They were backward-looking and

lacked any modern feeling of nationalism or a modern understanding of the nature and character of colonialism or the building of a new society on the basis of new social relationships. Their leadership was inevitably traditional and completely unaware of the changing world around them. They did not pose a real challenge to British power even though the British had sometimes to deploy large armies to suppress them. Their great contribution lay in the establishment of valuable local traditions of struggle against foreign rule.

The culmination of the traditional opposition to British rule came with the Revolt of 1857 in which millions of peasants, artisans, and soldiers participated. The Revolt of 1857 was to stake British rule to its roots.

The Revolt began with a mutiny of the sepoys, or the Indian soldiers of the East India Company's army but soon engulfed wide regions and people. It was a product of the accumulated grievances of the people against the foreign government. The peasants were discontented with the official land revenue policy and the consequent loss of their lands and the oppression and corrupt practices of the police, petty officials, and the lower law-courts. The middle- and upper-classes of Indian society, particularly in the north, were hard hit by their exclusion from the well-paid higher posts in the administration. Men who followed cultural or religious pursuits, for example, priests and scholars, *pandits* and *maulavis*, found themselves without incomes as their patrons, the Indian rulers, princes, and zamindars, lost authority. The annexation of Avadh by the British in 1856 was widely resented and especially in Avadh. This action angered the Company's soldiers, most of whom came from Avadh. Moreover, they had now to pay higher taxes on the lands their families held in Avadh. The British also confiscated the estates of a majority of the taluqdars or zamindars. These

dispossessed taluqdars became dangerous opponents of British rule. The annexationist policy followed by the British Viceroy, Lord Dalhousie, also created panic among many rulers of the native states. These rulers now realised that total submission and humiliating declarations of loyalty to the foreign power could not guarantee their existence. This policy of annexation was, for example, directly responsible for making Nana Sahib, the Rani of Jhansi, and Bahadur Shah staunch enemies of the British. The Company's soldiers or the sepoys were discontented with their low pay, and hard life and the contemptuous treatment meted out to them by their British officers. As a contemporary English observer noted : "The sepoy is esteemed an inferior creature. He is sworn at. He is treated roughly. He is spoken of as a 'nigger'. He is addressed as a 'suar' or pig... The younger men...treat him as an inferior animal." Moreover, a sepoy had little prospects of promotion; no Indian could rise higher than a *subedar* drawing sixty or seventy rupees a month.

Thus, by 1857, conditions were ready for a mass upheaval. The spark was provided by the episode of the greased cartridges. The cartridges of the new enfield rifle had a greased paper cover whose end had to be bitten off before use. The grease was in some instances composed of beef and pig fat. The sepoys were angered at this affront to their religious feelings. They were ready to rebel. And their mutiny was to provide other sections of Indian society the occasion to revolt.

The Revolt began at Meerut, 36 miles from Delhi, on 10 May 1957, with a mutiny of soldiers, and then gathering force spread to a vast area from the Panjab in the north and the Narmada in the south to Bihar in the east and Rajputana in the west. The Meerut soldiers killed their officers and set off for Delhi. Their appearance in Delhi the next morning was a signal to the Delhi soldiers who in turn revolted, seized the city, and proclaimed the aged Bahadur Shah, the Emperor of India. The

soldiers thus transformed their mutiny into a revolutionary war. From now on, all soldiers and Indian chiefs and zamindars who took part in the revolt hastened to proclaim their loyalty to the Mughal Emperor who became a symbol of Indian unity.

Everywhere in Northern and Central India the mutiny of the sepoys was followed by popular revolts of the civilian population. The common people often fought with spears and axes, bows and arrows, lathis and scythes, and crude muskets. It is the wide participation in the Revolt by the peasantry and the artisans which gave it real strength especially in the areas of the present-day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. According to one estimate, of the total number of about 150,000 men who died fighting the English in Avadh, over 100,000 were civilians.

An important element in the strength of the Revolt of 1857 lay in Hindu-Muslim unity. Among the soldiers and the people as well as among the leaders there was complete co-operation as between Hindus and Muslims. All the rebels recognised Bahadur Shah, a Muslim, as their Emperor. The Hindu and Muslim rebels and sepoys respected each other's sentiments. For example, wherever the Revolt was successful, orders were immediately issued banning cow-slaughter out of respect for Hindu sentiments. Moreover, Hindu and Muslims were equally well-represented at all levels of leadership. A senior British official later complained: "In this instance we could not play off the Mohammedans against the Hindus." In fact the events of 1857 clearly bring out that the people and politics of India were not basically communal in medieval times and before 1858.

In the end British imperialism, at the height of its power the world over and supported by most of the Indian princes and chiefs, proved militarily too strong for the rebels who lacked weapons, organisation, discipline and a united and determined leadership. Before they could make good these deficiencies, the British Government mobilised its immense resources

and suppressed them most ruthlessly. The rebels were dealt a powerful blow when the British captured Delhi on 20 September 1857 and made the Emperor Bahadur Shah a prisoner. The other leaders carried on bravely but fell one by one. Nana Sahib was defeated at Kanpur. His loyal commander, Tantia Tope, carried on heroic and brilliant guerilla warfare until April 1859 when a zamindar friend betrayed him to the enemy. The Rani of Jhansi died fighting with sword in hand on 17 June 1858. By 1859, Kunwar Singh of Bihar, Bakht Khan, the brilliant sepoy who had risen to the military command of the Delhi rebels, Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, and Maulavi Ahmadullah of Faizabad were all dead, while the Begum of Avadh had to flee to Nepal.

By the end of 1859, British authority over India was fully established but the Revolt had not been in vain. Though it was a desperate effort to save India in the old way and under traditional leadership, it was the first great struggle of the Indian people for freedom from British imperialism. The heroes of the Revolt soon became household names in the country, even though the very mention of their names was frowned upon by the rulers.

Tribal Uprisings

The tribal people, spread over a large part of India, participated in hundreds of uprisings. They resented the extension of British control and the intrusion of the colonial administration. And, most of all, they objected to the penetration of their simple and sheltered lives by the moneylenders, traders, and revenue farmers who were the instruments of the British in bringing the tribal people within the influence and control of colonial economy and exploitation. The rebellions of the tribal people were marked by immense courage and sacrifice on their part and veritable butchery on the part of the official

machinery of suppression. Lakhs died in unequal battles between angry but disorganised men armed with such primitive weapons as axes, bows and arrows on the one side and the disciplined regiments of the British Indian army equipped with the latest weapons of war. Among the numerous tribal revolts those of the Kols from 1820 to 1837, the Santhals in 1855-56, the Rampas in 1879, and the Mundas from 1895-1901 stand out.

Peasant Movements and Uprisings

The main brunt of colonial exploitation was borne by the Indian peasantry which, consequently, fought back at every step. Unfortunately, the details of peasant resistance to British colonialism are not easily available. They still lie hidden in Government archives and other sources of modern history. Moreover, the peasant revolts are to be often found listed as acts of lawlessness and dacoity in the official records. It is only in the last few years that we have begun to get some preliminary glimpses of the numerous acts of peasant resistance to British authority.

As we have seen earlier, the peasants formed the back-bone of the civil rebellions which were often led by zamindars and petty chieftains. This was, above all, true of the Revolt of 1857. Another set of peasant revolts took on a religious colouring. Starting out as movements of religious and social reform and purification, they soon revealed their agrarian origins by frontally attacking the new zamindars, landlords, and money-lenders, irrespective of their religion. In the end they clashed with British imperialism. Such were, for example, the Wahabi Movement that at one stage embraced Bengal, Bihar, the Panjab, and Madras, the Farazi Movement of Bengal, and the Kuka Revolt in the Panjab.

There was a certain shift in the nature of peasant resistance to British rule after 1858. The peasants now fought directly for peasant demands and against the Government, the foreign planters and the indigenous zamindars and moneylenders.

One of the greatest peasant movements of the modern era was the indigo agitation that engulfed Bengal in 1859-60. Indigo cultivation was a strict European monopoly The foreign planters compelled the peasants to cultivate indigo and subjected them to untold oppression. To force them to produce indigo at uneconomic rates the planters took recourse to illegal beatings and detentions. This oppression was vividly portrayed by the famous Bengali writer Dinbandhu Mitra in his play *Nil Darpan* published in 1860. The peasant anger burst out in 1859. Hundreds of thousands of peasants spontaneously refused to cultivate indigo and stoutly resisted the physical brutality and violence of the planters and their armed retainers. The new intelligentsia of Bengal rose to the occasion and organised a powerful campaign in support of the rebellious peasantry. The Government was compelled to appoint a commission leading to the mitigation of the worst abuses of the system. But both planter oppression and peasant resistance continued. The indigo peasants of Bihar revolted on a large scale in Darbhanga and Champaran in 1866-68. Similarly the peasants of Jessore in Bengal revolted in 1883 and 1889-90.

Agrarian unrest broke out once again in the 1870's, in East Bengal this time. The powerful zamindars of Bengal were notorious for their oppression of the tenants. They freely took recourse to ejection, harassment, illegal seizure of property, including crops and chattels and extortions, and large-scale use of force to increase rents and to prevent the peasants from acquiring occupancy rights. The Bengal peasants also had a long tradition of resistance stretching back to 1782, when the peasants of North Bengal had rebelled against the East

India Company's revenue farmer. Debi Singh. From 1872-76 they united in no-rent unions and attacked zamindars and their agents in different parts of East Bengal. Peasant resistance was suppressed only after the Government intervened and took energetic steps to put it down. Even so, peasant unrest broke out sporadically in the succeeding years and was quietened only when the Government promised to undertake legislation to protect the peasants from the worst aspects of zamindari oppression. Once again large sections of the new intelligentsia gave support to the peasants' cause.

A major agrarian outbreak occurred in the Poona and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra in 1875. In Maharashtra the Government had settled the land revenue directly with the peasants. At the same time the Government's revenue demand was pitched at such a high level that most of the peasants found it impossible to meet it without borrowing from the moneylenders who charged very high interest. More and more land was mortgaged or sold to the moneylenders who resorted to every possible legal and illegal trick and chicanery to strengthen their hold over the cultivator and his land. Peasant patience got exhausted by the end of 1874. The peasants of Poona and Ahmednagar districts organised a social boycott of the moneylenders which was soon transformed into agrarian riots. Everywhere they took forcible possession of their debt bonds, decrees, and other documents dealing with their debts and burnt them publicly. The police failed to meet the fury of peasant resistance which was suppressed only when 'the whole military force at Poona, horse, foot and artillery' took the field against them. Once again, the modern intelligentsia of Maharashtra supported the peasant demands. But they also pointed out that the real source of peasant misery lay in the high land revenue demand and the failure of the Government to provide cheaper sources of credit to the peasant.

Peasant unrest also broke out in other parts of the country. Goaded by landlords' *(Jenmis)* oppression, the *Moppila* peasants of Malabar (north Kerala) organised 22 rebellions from 1836 to 1854. Moppila discontent found renewed expression in five major outbreaks from 1873-80. Similarly, high land revenue assessment led to a series of peasant riots in the plains of Assam during 1893-94. The peasants refused to pay the enhanced revenue demand, unitedly resisted official attempts to seize their fields, and fought back the revenue collectors. The Government had to mobilise a large network of soldiers and armed policemen to suppress the peasant movement. Many peasants were killed in brutal firings and bayonet charges. The barbarous behaviour of the police and the army at that time is remembered to this day by the people of Assam.

At no stage did the peasant movements and popular uprisings of the 19th century threaten British supremacy over India. They represented an instinctive and spontaneous response of the peasantry and the tribal people to large-scale dispossession and intolerable oppression consequent upon the colonialisation of the Indian economy. Their anger was often directed against the immediate source of their misery—the indigo planter, the zamindar, or the moneylender. But they also stoutly resisted the British effortsto bolster the colonial agrarian structure in the name of maintaining law and order Thus in practice the ignorant and illiterate masses of India showed a better appreciation of the menace of colonialism than the newly educated or upper-class Indians. At the same time, their struggles were foredoomed to failure. Their faith, their courage and heroism, their willingness to make immense sacrifices were no match against the imperialist power armed with the latest weapons and the resources of a world-wide empire. They did not possess a new ideology, or a new social, economic, and political programme based on an analysis of the new social forces generated by

colonialism. They lacked a positive concept of society or a new way of life that could unite the people on a wide scale. Scattered and sporadic and disunited uprisings, however numerous, could not defeat modern imperialism. For that, an attack based on modern thought and analysis, on a new vision of society, and on new ideologies and parties capable of mobilising the masses for nationwide political activity was needed. This came about in the 20th century when the discontent of the peasant masses was merged with the general anti-imperialist discontent and their political activity found expression in the wider national movement and the modern *kisan* movements. The popular movements and rebellions of the 19th century did, however, reveal the immense sources of resistance to imperialism that lay dormant among the Indian people.

MODERN POLITICS AND NEW POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the flowering of national political consciousness and the foundation and growth of an organised national movement. During this period the modern Indian intelligentsia created political associations to spread political education and to initiate political work in the country. This work was to be based on new political ideas, a new intellectual perception of reality, new social, economic, and political objectives, new forces of struggle and resistance and new techniques of political organisation. It was to represent a turning point in ideology, policy, organisation and leadership. The task was difficult, since Indians were utterly unfamiliar with modern political work. Even the notion that people could organise politically in opposition to their rulers was a novel one. Consequently, the work of these early associations and of the early political workers proceeded rather slowly and it took

more than half a century to bring the common people within the fold of modern politics.

Raja Rammohun Roy was one of the first Indian leaders to start an agitation for political reforms. He fought for the freedom of the Press, trial by jury, the separation of the executive and the judiciary, appointment of Indians to higher offices, protection of the ryots from zamindari oppression, and development of Indian trade and industries. He based his entire public activity on the hope that a period of British rule would be followed by the emergence of a free India. He took keen interest in international affairs and everywhere he supported the cause of liberty, democracy and nationalism.

Rammohun's tradition was carried on after his death by the radical Bengali youth known as the Derozians, so named after their famous Anglo-Indian teacher Henry Vivian Derozio. Derozio inspired his pupils with a fierce love of liberty and patriotism based on the ideas of the French Revolution, Tom Paine, and Jeremy Bentham. The Derozians started numerous public associations to discuss modern ideas and their application to India and a large number of newspapers and journals to propagate these ideas. Thus the germs of modern political consciousness were sown in the 1820's and 1830's by Rammohun Roy and the Derozians.

The first political association to be started in India was the Landholders' Society at Calcutta in 1838; but it was started with the narrow aim of protecting the class interests of the zamindars of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In 1843, the Bengal British Indian Society was organised with wider political objectives. In 1851 came the British Indian Association. Simultaneously, the Madras Native Association and the Bombay Association were established in 1852. Many similar associations and clubs were established in smaller cities and towns all over the country. Almost all of them were dominated by wealthy

commercial or zamindari elements and were local in character. They presented political and economic demands before the British Indian Government and the British Parliament and worked mainly for administrative reforms, larger employment of Indians in administrative services, the spread of education, association of Indians with the government, and, the encouragement of Indian trade and industries.

The failure of the Revolt of 1857 made it clear that the traditional political resistance to British rule under the leadership of the landed upper classes—zamindars, princes and landlords—could no longer succeed and that resistance to colonialism must flow along new channels. On the other hand, as we have seen earlier, the character of British rule and policies underwent a major change after 1858. It became more reactionary. The Indian intelligentsia gradually but increasingly became more critical of British policies and began to grasp the exploitative character of British rule. It may be noted that the reaction of the modern Indian intelligentsia to colonialism, in contrast with the instinctive reaction of the peasantry was hesitant, less militant, and less scientific. The understanding of the Indian intelligentsia took a long time to develop. But the process once begun, based as it was on modern thought, probed deeper into the real nature of imperialism and was ultimately transformed into modern political activity.

The politically conscious Indians realised that the existing political associations were too narrowly conceived to be useful in the changed circumstances. For example, the British Indian Association had increasingly identified itself with the interests of the zamindars and consequently with the ruling power. But the new politics had increasingly to be based on a critical attitude to British rule. And so, they groped their way towards a new type of nationalist political organisation.

In 1866 Dadabhai Naoroji organised the East India Association

in London to discuss Indian questions and to influence British public opinion. Branches of the Association were organised in major Indian cities. Dadabhai Naoroji was soon to be known to his contemporaries and to the succeeding generations of Indians as the Grand Old Man of India. Born in 1825, he became a successful businessman but he dedicated his entire life and wealth to the national movement. His greatest contribution came in his economic analysis of British rule. He showed that the poverty and economic backwardness of India were not inherent in local conditions, but were caused by colonial rule which was draining India of its wealth and capital. All his life Dadabhai kept in touch with youth and continuously developed his thought and politics in a radical direction.

Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ganesh Vasudev Joshi, S.H. Chiplunkar and others organised the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in 1870. The Sabha carried on active political education for the next thirty years.

The openly reactionary and anti-Indian measures introduced under Lytton's Viceroyalty from 1876 to 1880 quickened the pace of Indian nationalist activity. The removal of import duties on British textiles to appease Lancashire manufacturers' jealousy of the rising Indian textile industry, the aggressive and expansionist war against Afghanistan, whose expense was thrown on the Indian exchequer, the Arms Act which was intended to make it impossible for the Indian people to offer any kind of resistance or even train themselves for defence, the Vernacular Press Act which sought to curb the growing criticism of British rule, the holding of the Imperial Durbar at Delhi at a time when millions were dying of famine, and lastly the reduction of the maximum age of competition for the Indian Civil Service examination from 21 to 19 which further reduced the chances of Indians entering the Civil Service—all these steps were visible manifestations of the exploitative and colonial character of British rule. Spontane-

ous protests against these measures were organised all over the country. The doctrine of Swadeshi was first preached during the 1870's as a method of protecting Indian industries against the onslaught of British manufacturers.

The new political mood among the young Indians was first noticed in Bengal. The conservative and pro-zamindar politics of the British India Association did not suit the new middle class and the intelligentsia, who now staked their claim to be the champions of the people in competition with the zamindars. They also refused to accept the doctrine that India must be ruled by Britain forever. Led by Anand Mohan Bose and Surendra Nath Banerjea, they founded the Indian Association in July 1876. The first issue taken up by the new association for agitation was that of the reform of the system of the Civil Service examinations. The association sent Surendra Nath Banerjea as a special delegate to other parts of the country to canvass support for the agitation. He was perhaps the first modern Indian to gain an all-India popularity. In order to bring the common people into the current of the broad political movement, the leaders of the Indian Association organised agitations in favour of the rights of the tenants against the zamindars and the plantation workers against the foreign tea planters. The Association also opened branches in different towns and villages of Bengal and in many cities outside Bengal.

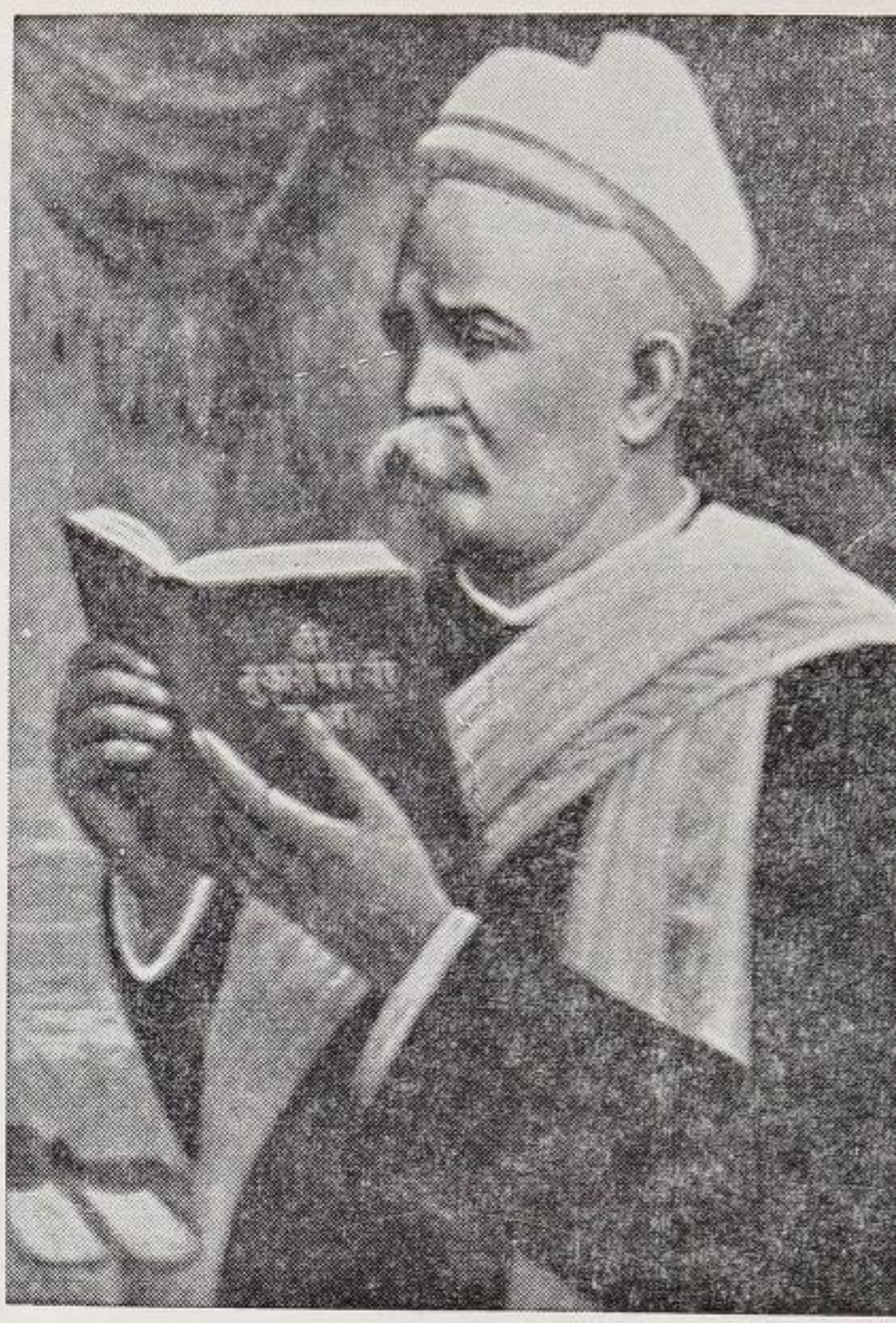
The younger elements were also active in other parts of India. In 1884, M. Viraraghavachari, G. Subramania Iyer, Ananda Charlu and others formed the Madras Mahajan Sabha. In Bombay, Pherozeshah Mehta, K. T. Telang, Badruddin Tyabjii and others formed the Bombay Presidency Association in 1885.

The politically conscious Indians were increasingly becoming aware of the need for an all-India organisation not only to provide a common forum for the meeting of minds and the formulation of a common programme of activity, but also to carry on public education with a view to creating in time a broad-based freedom struggle. The social basis for such an organisation was now well laid and enough experience had been gathered. Many Indians from different parts of the country—Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta, K. T. Telang, Rahimutullah Muhammed Sayani, Jhaverilal Umashankar Yajnik, and Badruddin Tyabji in West India, G. Subramania Iyer, S. Subramania Iyer, and Ananda Charlu in South India, and W. C. Bonnerjee, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Ananda Mohan Bose, Lal Mohan Ghosh and Kali Charan Banerjee in Eastern India—had simultaneously begun to plan the setting up of an all-India nationalist organisation. The Indian Association had already in December 1883 sponsored an All-India National Conference. But the attempt had not been very successful. The idea was given a more concrete shape by the Bombay group of nationalist political workers who co-operated with A. O. Hume, an Englishman and a retired Civil Servant, to bring together at Bombay in the last days of December 1885 political leaders from different parts of the country. These leaders decided to start the Indian National Congress to be presided over in the first instance by W. C. Bonnerjee.

It has been said that Hume's main purpose in encouraging the foundation of the Congress was to provide a 'safety valve' or a safe outlet to the growing discontent among the educated Indians. He wanted to prevent the union of a discontented nationalist intelligentsia with a discontented peasantry. By patronising a mild political movement he hoped to prevent it from getting out of control. Hume was to write later : "No choice was left to

Delegates to the First Session of the Indian National Congress, 1885

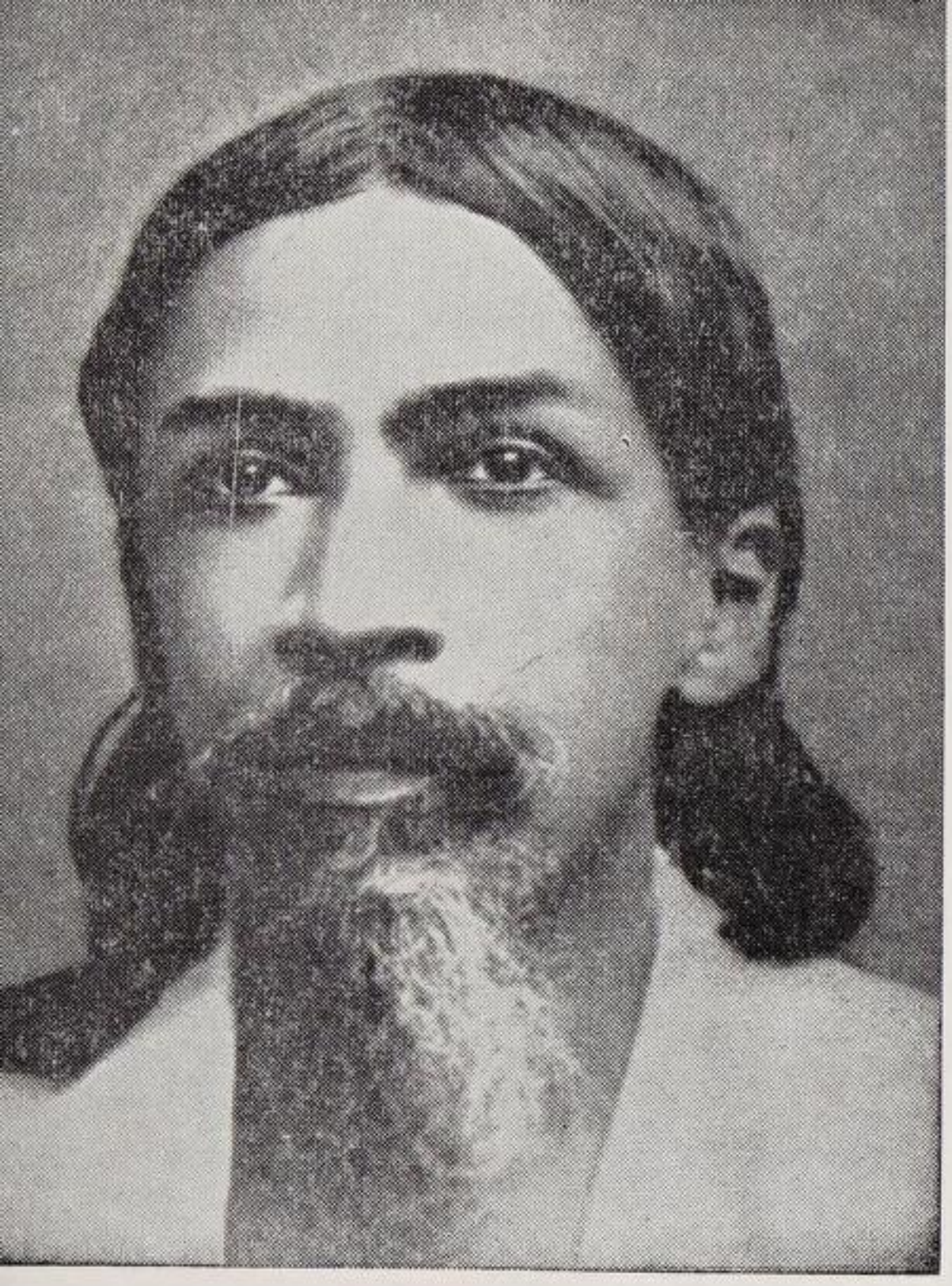
Dadabhai Naoroji



M. G. Ranade

Surendra Nath Banerjee

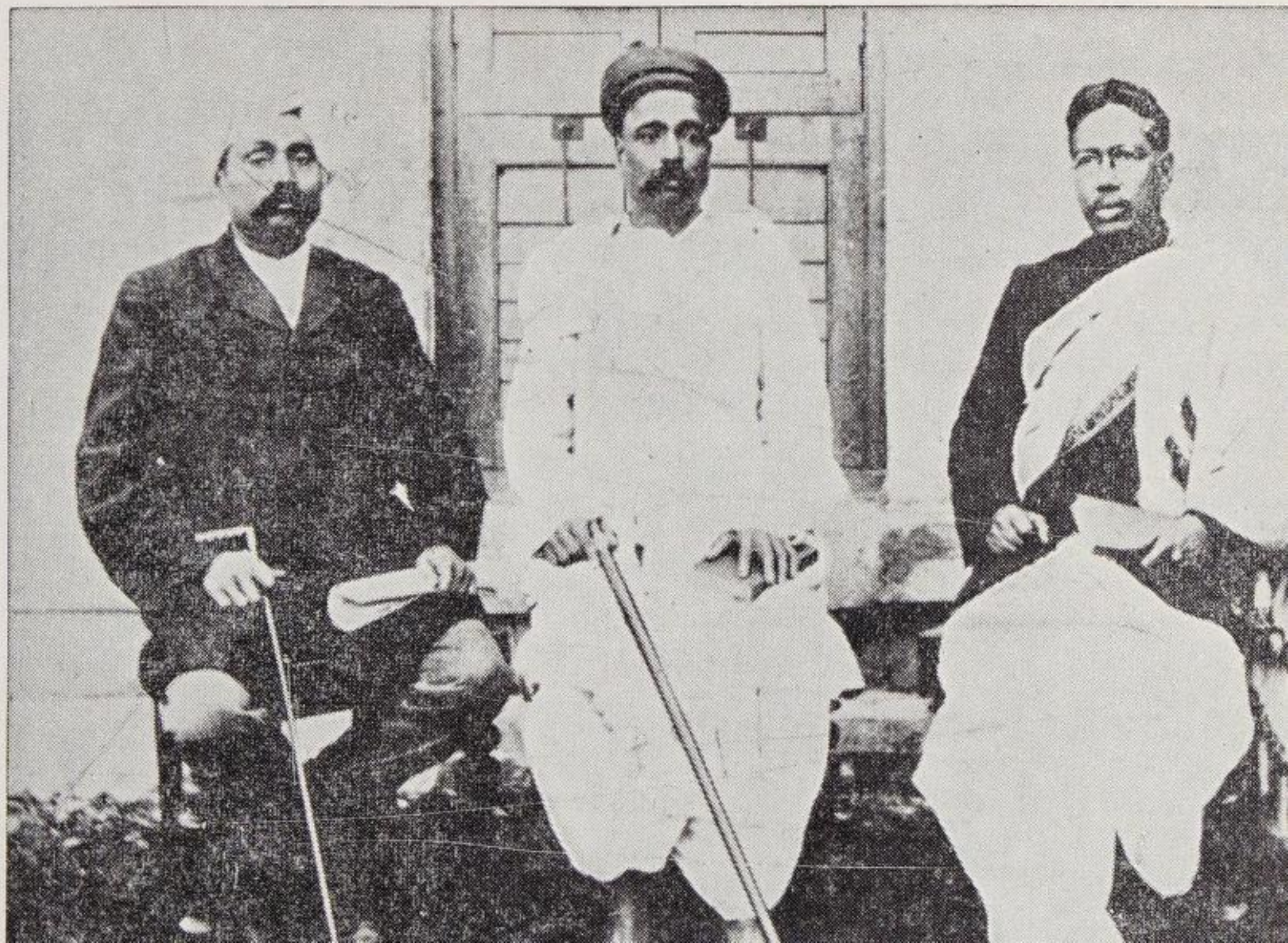
Badruddin Tyabji

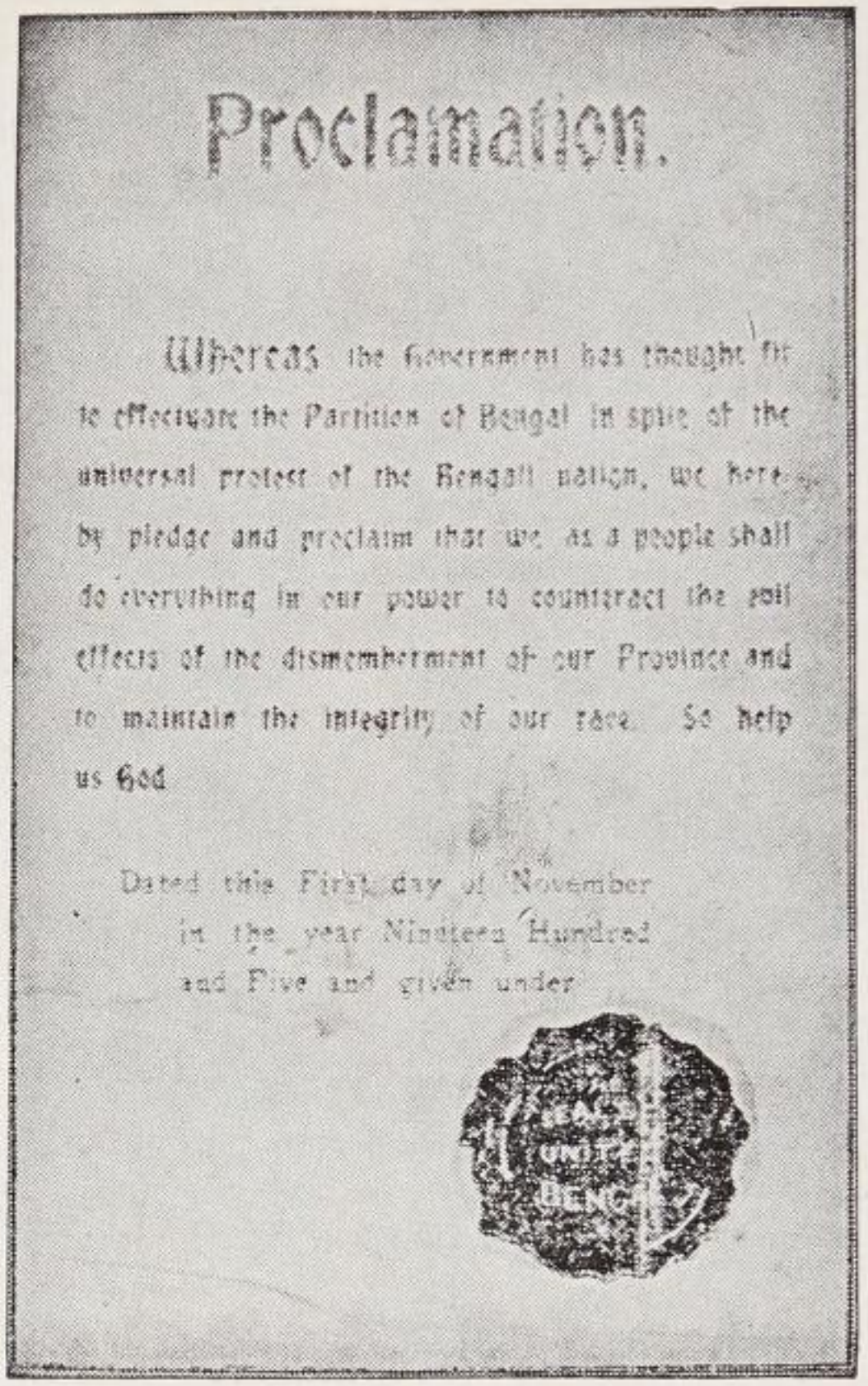


Aurobindo Ghosh

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal




Proclamation.

Whereas the Government has thought fit to effectuate the Partition of Bengal in spite of the universal protest of the Bengali nation, we hereby pledge and proclaim that we as a people shall do everything in our power to counteract the evil effects of the dismemberment of our Province and to maintain the integrity of our race. So help us God.

Dated this First day of November
in the year Nineteen Hundred
and Five and given under

Proclamation in protest of Bengal Partition

Home Rule League Procession in Poona

those who gave the primary impetus to the movement. The ferment...was at work with a radically increasing intensity, and it became of paramount importance to find for its products an overt and constitutional channel for discharge, instead of leaving them to fester as they had already commenced to do, under the surface."

This explanation is, however, totally inadequate and misleading as an explanation of the foundation of the National Congress. This at the most explains to a limited extent Hume's role in the episode. The Indians who actively worked for the creation of an all-India political organisation represented new social forces that were increasingly opposed to the exploitation of India for British interests. They needed an organisation that would fight, for India's political and economic advancement. They were patriotic men of high character and were in no way stooges of the foreign government. They co-operated with Hume because they did not want to arouse official hostility to their early political efforts and they hoped that a retired Civil Servant's active presence would allay official suspicions. If Hume wanted to use Congress as a 'safety valve', the early Congress leaders hoped to use him as a 'lightening conductor'. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was to point out later in 1913 that

> no Indian could have started the Indian National Congress... If an Indian had...come forward to start such a movement, embracing all India, the officials would not have allowed it to come into existence. If the founder of the Congress had not been a great Englishman and a distinguished ex-official, such was the distrust of political agitation in those days that the authorities would have at once found some way or the other of suppressing the movement.

In any case, there is no doubt that with the foundation of the

Indian National Congress in 1885 the struggle for India's freedom was launched in a small, hesitant and mild, but organised manner. It was to grow in strength year by year and in the end involve the Indian people in powerful and militant campaigns against the foreign rulers.

It would, however, be wrong to look upon the Indian National Congress as the sole or even the chief medium for the spread of nationalist consciousness during the years 1885 to 1905. There were numerous other channels for the development and articulation of nationalism during this period. Numerous local and provincial political associations carried on day-to-day political agitation. Provincial Conferences were held every year and involved a larger popular participation. Most of all the nationalist newspapers acted as the organisers and publicists of nationalism. Most of the newspapers of the period were not carried on as business ventures but were consciously started as organs of nationalist activity. Their owners and editors had often to make immense personal sacrifices. All the major nationalist newspapers of the period were founded before the National Congress came into being. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Indian Mirror*, the *Sanjivani*, and the *Bengalee* in Bengal, the *Hindu*, the *Swadesamitran*, the *Andhra Prakasika* and the *Kerala Patrika*, in Madras, the *Mahratta*, the *Kesari*, the *Indu Prakash*, and the *Sudharak* in Bombay, the *Advocate*, the *Hindustani* and the *Azad* in U.P., and the *Tribune*, the *Akhbar-i-Am* and the *Koh-i-Noor* in the Panjab, were some of the prominent nationalist newspapers of the period.

THE PROGRAMME AND ACTIVITIES OF THE EARLY NATIONALISTS

The early Indian nationalist leadership believed that a direct

struggle for the political emancipation of the country was not yet on the agenda of history. What was on the agenda was the arousal of national feeling, consolidation of this feeling, the bringing of a large number of the Indian people into the vortex of nationalist politics and their training in politics, political agitation and struggle. The first important task in this respect was the creation of public interest in political questions and the organisation of public opinion in the country. Secondly, popular demands had to be formulated on a country-wide basis so that the emerging public opinion might have an all-India focus. Most important of all, national unity had to be created, in the first instance, among the politically conscious Indians and political workers and leaders. The early nationalists were fully aware of the fact that India was a nation in the making, that Indian nationhood was gradually coming into being and could not, therefore, be taken for granted as an accomplisbed fact. The political leaders must constantly work for the development and consolidation of the feeling of national unity irrespective of region, caste, or religion. The Indian National Congress, for instance, hoped to make a humble beginning in this direction by promoting close contact and friendly relations among active nationalists from different parts of the country. The economic and political demands of the early nationalists were formulated with a view to unify the Indian people on the basis of a common economic and political programme.

ECONOMIC CRITIQUE OF IMPERIALISM

Perhaps the most important part of the early nationalists' political work was their economic critique of imperialism. They took note of all the three forms of contemporary economic exploitation, namely, through trade, industry, and finance. They

clearly grasped that the essence of British economic imperialism lay in the subordination of the Indian economy to the British economy. They vehemently opposed the British attempt to develop in India the basic characteristics of a colonial economy, namely, the transformation of India into a supplier of raw materials, a market for British manufactures, and a field of investment for foreign capital. They organised a powerful agitation against nearly all the important official economic policies based on this colonial structure. Moreover, in every sphere of economic life they advocated the lessening and even severance of India's economic dependence on England.

The early nationalists constantly wrote and spoke about India's growing poverty and linked it with the British economic exploitation of India. Dadabhai Naoroji pointed out that Indians "were mere helots. They were worse than American slaves, for the latter were at least taken care of by their masters whose property they were". He declared that British rule was "an everlasting, increasing, and everyday increasing foreign invasion", that was "utterly, though gradually, destroying the country".

The early nationalists criticised the official economic policies for bringing about the ruin of India's traditional handicraft industries and for obstructing the development of modern industries. Most of them opposed the large-scale import of foreign capital for investment in the Indian railways, plantations, and industries on the ground that it would lead to the suppression of Indian capitalists and the further strengthening of the British hold on India's economy and polity. They believed that the employment of foreign capital posed a serious economic and political danger not only to the present generation but also to the generations to come. They asked for active administrative measures to keep out foreign capital.

The chief remedy suggested by the early nationlists for the removal of poverty was the modernisation of Indian life in all

fields, and, in particular, the development of modern industry. But rapid industrialisation required active State assistance and a policy of tariff protection. They urged the Government to aid Indian industries through financial subsidies, loans and guarantees through State-aided or controlled banks, by borrowing abroad and lending in India, by pioneering State-owned industries in fields such as steel and mining, which Indian capitalists were too weak to enter, but, which were essential for industrial development, by collecting and disseminating industrial and commercial information, and, by promoting technical education.

The early nationalists also popularised the idea of Swadeshi as a means of promoting Indian industries. Many Swadeshi stores were opened. Ganesh Vasudev Joshi attended the Imperial Durbar of 1877 dressed in immaculate hand-spun khadi. In 1896 a powerful Swadeshi campaign was organised in Maharashtra during which students publicly burnt foreign cloth.

The nationalists organised a powerful all-India agitation against the abandonment of tariff duties on imports from 1857 to 1880 and against the imposition of Cotton Excise Duties in 1849 and 1896. This agitation played a major role in arousing countrywide national feelings and in educating the people regarding the real aims and purposes of British rule in India. The *Kesari* from Poona wrote on 28 January 1896 : "Surely India is treated as a vast pasture reserved solely for the Europeans to feed upon." And P. Ananda Charlu, an ex-President of the Indian National Congress, commented in 1896 in the Legislative Council : "While India is safe-guarded against foreign inroads by the strong arm of the British power, she is defenceless in matters where the English and Indian interests clash and where (as a Tamil saying puts it) the very fence begins to feed on the crop."

The early nationalists carried on a persistent agitation for the reduction of the heavy land revenue demand. They urged

the Government to provide cheap credit to the peasantry through State-sponsored agricultural banks and to make available large-scale irrigation facilities. Some of them also criticised the semi-feudal agrarian relations that the British sought to maintain. They also agitated for improvement in the conditions of work of the plantation labourers. They demanded a radical change in the existing pattern of taxation and expenditure. They pointed out that the existing system of taxation put heavy burdens on the poor, while leaving the rich, especially the foreigners, with a very light load. They, therefore, demanded abolition of the salt tax and other taxes that hit the poor and the lower middle-classes hard. The existing pattern of expenditure, they said, was geared to the imperial needs of Britain, instead of promoting the development and welfare of the Indians. They condemned the high expenditure on the army that was used to maintiain Britain's domination in Asia and Africa. They also attacked the expenditure on the Civil Service whose members were paid high salaries that were out of all proportion to the level of the economic development of the country. They critcised the official policy of promoting foreign trade and railway development with a view to promote imports of manufactures and exports of raw materials. Trade and transport policies, they said, should be geared to internal economic development.

One of the most powerful weapons in the nationalist armoury of anti-imperialist criticism was that of the drain theory. The nationalists pointed out that a large part of India's capital and wealth was being drained out or exported to Britain unilaterally or without return in the form of interest on loans, earnings of British capital invested in India, and the salaries and pensions of the civil and military personnel serving in India. The drain was the visible and concentrated form that the foreign economic exploitation of India took. By attacking the drain, the early nationalists called into question the very essence of the economics

of imperialism. It was also the symbol through which the common man could grasp the existence of colonial exploitation.

There was a claim being made in those days that British rule had brought India the benefits of security of life and property. Questioning this claim Dadabhai Naoroji remarked :

> The romance is that there is security of life and property in India; the reality is that there is no such thing. There is security of life and property in one sense or way—i.e., the people are secure from any violence from each other or from Native despots....But from England's own grasp there is no security of property at all, and, as a consequence, no security for life. India's property is not secure. What is secure, and well secure, is that England is perfectly safe and secure, and does so with perfect security, to carry away from India, and to eat up in India, her property at the present rate of £30,000,000 or £40,000,000 a year...I therefore venture to submit that India does not enjoy security of her property and life... To millions in India life is simply "half-feeding" or starvation, or famines and disease.

The British also tried to suggest that with their coming law and order came to be maintained efficiently in the country. Refuting this with scorn and sarcasm Dadabhai said :

> There is an Indian saying : 'Pray strike on the back, but don't strike on the belly.' Under the native despot the people keep and enjoy what they produce, though at times they suffer some violence on the back. Under the British Indian despot the man is at peace, there is no violence; his substance is drained away, unseen, peaceably and subtly—

he starves in peace and perishes in peace, with law and order !

So this agitation on economic questions led to the growth of an all-India opinion that British rule was based on the exploitation of India, was leading to its impoverishment and was producing economic backwardness and underdevelopment. These disadvantages far outweighed any indirect advantages that might have followed British rule.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

The early nationalists were fearless critics of individual administrative measures and worked incessantly for the reform of an administrative system ridden with corruption, inefficiency and oppression. The most important administrative reform for which they agitated was the Indianisation of the higher grades of the administrative services. This demand was put forward on economic, political, and moral grounds. Economically, the high salaries paid to the Europeans put a heavy burden on Indian finances and contributed to the drain, since a large part of these salaries was exported to Britain. Politically, the European civil servants ignored Indian needs and, in particular, favoured European capitalists at the cost of Indian capitalists. Morally, it dwarfed Indian character reducing the tallest Indian to a position of permanent inferiority in his own country. At the same time, the early nationalists agitated for higher salaries to the low-paid lower grade government employees. They believed that a great deal inefficiency and corruption at the lower levels due to the very low salaries paid to the employees at the base.

The early nationalists constantly agitated against the oppressive

and tyrannical behaviour of the police and the Government agents towards the common people. The nationalist newspapers daily brought to light numerous examples of such tyranny. The nationalists demanded the separation of the judiciary from the executive so that the people might get some protection from the arbitrary acts of the police and the bureaucracy. They criticised the delays of law and the high cost of the judicial process. They condemned the perversion of justice every time an Indian was involved in a criminal dispute with a European and demanded that the principle of equality before the law should be applied to the Europeans also. They opposed the policy of disarming the people and argued that all people had the right to bear arms. They opposed the aggressive foreign policy against India's neighbours. They protested against the policy of the annexation of Burma, the attack upon Afghanistan and the suppression of the tribal people in North-Western India.

The early nationalists criticised the low level of the welfare services in India and urged the Government to undertake and develop the welfare activities of the State. In particular, they emphasised the need for the spread of education among the masses. They also demanded greater facilities for technical and higher education and the extension of medical and health facilities. Most of all, as we have seen earlier, they demanded active administrative measures to develop Indian industries and agriculture.

The nationalist leaders also took up the cause of Indian workers who had migrated to British colonies such as South Africa, Malaya, Mauritius, Fiji, the West Indies, and British Guiana. These workers were being subjected to extreme forms of racial discrimination and other kinds of oppression in these countries. In most cases their lot was no better than that of slaves. The nationalists gave full support to the popular struggle for human rights that was being waged in South Africa after 1893 by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

The Indian leaders also took up the cause of the plantation workers who were forced to live in conditions of near-slavery on low wages by the foreign planters. At the same time, it may be noted that they did not raise their voice in defence of the Indian factory and mine workers who were also being subjected to ruthless exploitation. In this case the Indian leaders gave precedence to the interests of the Indian capitalists.

DEFENCE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

From the beginning the politically conscious Indians had been powerfully attracted to modern civil rights, namely, the freedom of speech, the Press, thought, and association. Consequently, they put up a strong defence of these civil rights whenever the Government tried to curtail them. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878, which sought to gag Indian language newspapers, was firmly opposed by them till it was repealed in 1880. Similarly, official attempts during the 1890's to curb newspaper criticism under the garb of protecting official secrets were stoutly opposed.

The most dramatic incident in this respect was the arrest of B. G. Tilak and several other leaders and newspaper editors in 1897 on the charge of spreading disaffection against the British Indian Government. Tilak, already a prominent nationalist leader, was given the barbarous sentence of *rigorous* imprisonment for 18 months. Two Poona leaders, the Natu Brothers, were deported without trial. Several other newspaper editors were meted out similar punishments. The nationalist newspapers and political associations were up in arms against this attack on civil liberties and a countrywide protest movement was organised. Overnight Tilak became a popular all-India leader and was given the title of *Lokmanya* by the people.

The Government now enacted new laws to curb the freedom of speech and the Press and to increase the powers of the police. Nationalist workers could now be dealt with in the same manner as goondas and other bad characters. A nationwide opposition to these laws was organised. In fact, from now on, the struggle in defence of civil liberties was to become an inseparable part of the struggle for freedom.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND THE DEMAND FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT

From the beginning the early nationalists believed that India should eventually move towards democratic self-government. But they did not demand immediate fulfilment of this goal. Instead, they suggested a step by step approach towards freedom. Their immediate political demands were extremely moderate. To start with, they said, India should be given a larger share in the government by expanding and reforming the existing Legislative Councils. By the Indian Councils Act of 1861, provision had been made for the nomination of a few non-officials to the councils. These non-official government nominees were usually zamindars and big merchants who completely toed the official line. For example, in 1888, they supported without hesitation an increase in the salt tax. They were often derisively described on the Congress platform with such epithets as 'gilded shams' and 'magnificent non-entities'. The nationalists demanded the widening of the powers of the Councils and an increase in the powers of the members to discuss the budget and to question and criticise the day to day administration. Most of all they demanded membership of the Councils for the elected representatives of the people.

Under popular pressure the Government amended the old provisions and passed the new Indian Councils Act of 1892. The Act increased the number of non-official members, a few of whom were to be indirectly elected. Members were also given the right to speak on the budget but not the right to vote upon it. Such a meagre reform left Indians utterly discontented. They saw in it a mockery of their demands. They now agitated for a non-official elected majority in the Councils and, most of all, for non-official Indian control over the public purse. They raised the slogan : no taxation without representation. At the same time, they failed to broaden the base of their democratic demand. They did not demand the right to vote for the masses or for women. Obviously, their demand would only benefit the middle- and upper-classes.

The early nationalists made a great advance in their political goals at the turn of the century. Their demand was no longer confined to petty reforms. They now demanded full self-government, including full Indian control over all legislation and finances, on the model of the self-governing colonies of Canada and Australia. They now demanded a change in the system. For example, this demand was made by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1904 and Gopal Krishna Gokhale in his Presidential Address to the Congress in 1905. Dadabhai Naoroji was the first Indian to use the word Swarajya for this demand at the Calcutta Session of the Congress in 1906. Thus, the basic difference of the early nationalists with the later nationalists did not lie in a different definition of the nationalist political goal. The real difference lay in the methods of struggle to achieve the agreed goals and the character of the social classes and groups on whom the struggle would be based. In other words, the difference was not in the goals but on how to realise them in practice.

METHODS OF POLITICAL WORK

It was the methods of political work of the early nationalists that earned them the title of Moderates. These methods can be summed up briefly as constitutional agitation within the four corners of the law and slow, orderly political progress. They believed that their main task was to educate people in modern politics, to arouse national political consciousness and to create a united public opinion on political questions. For this purpose, they relied on several methods. They held meetings where speeches of a very high political and intellectual calibre were made and resolutions setting forth popular demands were passed. Through the Press, the nationalists carried on a daily critique of the Government. They also sent numerous memorials and petitions to high Government officials and the British Parliament. These memorials and petitions were carefully drafted documents in which facts and arguments were diligently marshalled. Though ostensibly these petitions were addressed to the Government, their real aim was to educate the Indian people. For example, when in 1891 the young Gokhale expressed disappointment at the two-line reply of the Government to a carefully prepared memorial by the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, Justice Ranade replied :

> You don't realise our place in the history of our country. These memorials are nominally addressed to Government, in reality they are addressed to the people, so that they may learn how to think in these matters. This work must be done for many years, without expecting any other results, because politics of this kind is altogether new in this land.

A second objective of the early nationalist political work was to influence the British Government and British public opinion

to introduce the desired changes. The early nationalists initially believed that the British were unaware of the real conditions of India. They, therefore, set out to enlighten the British public and political leaders through memorials and petitions and by carrying on active political propaganda in Britain. Deputations of leading Indian leaders were sent to Britain. In 1889, a British Committee of the National Congress was founded. In 1890, this Committee started a journal called *India*. Dadabhai Naoroji spent a major part of his life and income in Britain doing propaganda work among its people and politicians.

Even though the early nationalists believed in legal agitation only, they failed to organise a nationwide or continuous agitation even on this limited basis except through the newspapers. This was partly due to the extreme paucity of funds. They were constantly short of money. The rich Indians—merchants, industrialists, and zamindars—did not yet give any financial support to the nationalist movement. Most of the political leaders had to maintain themselves on their own earnings, which were often meagre. For example, Surendra Nath Banerjea and Gopal Krishna Gokhale lived on the modest earnings of a teacher and Tilak ran a private coaching class for law students. This lack of funds partially explains the predominence of lawyers and journalists—the two independent professions—among the early nationalist leaders.

ROLE OF THE MASSES

The basic weakness of the early nationalist movement lay in its narrow social base. The movement did not yet have a wide appeal. The area of its influence was in the main limited to the urban educated Indians. In particular the leadership was confined to professional groups such as lawyers, doctors, journalists and teachers, and a few merchants and land-owners.

The leaders lacked political faith in the masses. They believed that the Indian people lacked the character and capacity to take part in modern politics and to wage a successful struggle against the most powerful imperialist power of the day. Describing the difficulties in the way of the organisation of active political struggle, Gokhale pointed to "endless divisions and sub-divisions in the country, the bulk of the population ignorant and clinging with a tenacity to the old modes of thought and sentiment, which are averse to all changes and do not understand change". The Moderate leaders made a serious mistake here. They only saw the social, cultural, and political backwardness of the masses, but they did not see that the masses alone possessed the qualities of heroism and sacrifice that a prolonged anti-imperialist struggle would require, that the masses alone could provide the real force behind their political demands, and that even the cultural and political backwardness of the masses could be removed only in the course of a struggle. They believed that militant mass struggle against imperialism could be waged only after the heterogeneous elements of Indian society had been welded into a nation. But in fact it was only in the course of such a struggle that the Indian nation could get formed. The result of this wrong approach towards them asses, itself the product of their isolation from the masses, was that the masses were assigned a purely passive role in the early phase of nationalism. It also led to political moderation. Lacking mass support, they felt that the time was not yet ripe for throwing a challenge to the foreign rulers. To do so would be to invite premature repression. As Gokhale put it: "You do not realise the enormous reserve of power behind the Government. If the Congress were to do anything such as you suggest, the Government would have no difficulty in throttling it in five minutes." The later nationalists were to differ from the Moderates in precisely this respect. Having full faith in the capacity of the Indian people to struggle,

they advocated a plan of militant mass struggle against imperialism. They believed that suppression by the Government would not 'throttle' the movement but would educate the people and further strengthen their resolve to overthrow imperialism.

The narrow social base of the early national movement should not, however, lead us to the conclusion that it fought for the narrow interests of the social classes and groups which joined it. Its programme and policies championed the cause of all sections of the Indian people and represented nationwide interests against colonial exploitation. Only, it failed to mobilise all the people in the anti-imperialist struggle and, consequently, it was forced to compromise with imperialism, often even talking of loyalty to the Raj.

OFFICIAL ATTITUDE

From the beginning the Government was hostile to the development of nationalist forces. It had come down heavily on the Indian Press in 1878 when it had tried to spread nationalist consciousness through criticism of colonial policies. Dufferin had looked with apprehension on the founding of the Indian National Congress. He had noted that "the functions of such an assembly must of necessity consist in criticising the acts or policy of Government and in formulating demands which it would be impossible to grant". He had tried to divert the movement by suggesting to Hume that the Congress should devote itself to social rather than political affairs.[1] But the Congress leaders had refused to make

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[1]The erroneous but widely prevalent view that it was on Dufferin's advice that the Congress shifted from social to political affairs was first put forward by W. C. Bonnerjea in the introduction to a book in 1898 and has since been carried forward by other writers. Dufferin's private papers show that the truth was the reverse of Bonerjea's failing memory.

the change. Still the British authorities had not adopted an openly hostile attitude. They had hoped that the National Congress would keep itself busy with academic discussions confined to a handful of the politically conscious Indians. They were also willing to accommodate the more brilliant among the nationalist leaders with seats in the legislative council and well-paid jobs in the judicial and other services.

But it soon became apparent that the National Congress and other nationalist associations and persons and newspapers would not confine themselves to such a limited role. The newspapers reached out to the people and the Congress began to publish popular pamphlets in Indian languages. The nationalist message began to be preached through mass meetings. The British could not tolerate the political awareness spreading among the common people. That was nothing but sedition. The nationalist economic agitation exposed the real, exploitative face of imperialism. As George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, complained to Dadabhai Naoroji in 1900 : "You announce yourself as a sincere supporter of British rule; you vehemently denounce the conditions and consequences which are inseparable from the maintenance of that rule." Earlier Dufferin had written about the role of the nationalist press in 1886 : "In this way there can be no doubt there is generated in the minds of those who read these papers... a sincere conviction that we are all of us the enemies of mankind in general and of India in particular."

British officials now began publicly to criticise and condemn the National Congress and other nationalist spokesmen. The nationalists were branded as 'disloyal babus', 'seditious Brahmins' and 'violent villains'. The Congress was described as a 'factory of sedition' and the Congressmen as 'disappointed candidates for office and discontented lawyers who represent no one but themselves'. In 1887, Dufferin attacked the National Congress in a public speech and ridiculed it as representing only

'a microscopic minority of the people'. George Hamilton accused Congress leaders of possessing 'seditious and double-sided character'. He was so bitter at Dadabhai Naoroji's exposure of British rule that he came down to common abuse of the great leader, declaring that residence in England and association with radical and socialist British leaders had "deteriorated whatever brains or presence he may originally have possessed". Curzon, the Viceroy, declared in 1900 that "the Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions, while in India, is to assist it to a peaceful demise". He described the Congress as that 'unclean thing.' Some British publicists even accused the Congress of receiving Russian gold !

The British authorities pushed further the policy of 'divide and rule' to counter the growing nationalist movement. They realised that the growing unity of the Indian people posed a major threat to their rule. George Hamilton wrote to Elgin, the Viceroy, in 1897 : "The solidarity, which is growing, of native opinion and races and religions in antagonism to our rule frightens me as regards the future." The British officials, therefore, encouraged Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Raja Shiva Prasad, and other pro-British individuals to start an anti-Congress movement. They also tried to drive a wedge between Hindus and Muslims. They fanned communal rivalry among the educated Indians on the question of jobs in Government service. While immediately after the Revolt of 1857 they had repressed the Muslim upper-classes and favoured the Hindu middle- and upper-classes, after 1870 they made an attempt to turn upper- and middle-class Muslims against the national movement. They cleverly exploited the controversy around Hindi and Urdu to promote communal feelings. The cow protection movement started by orthodox Hindus was used for the same purpose. Kimberley, the Secretary of State for India, wrote to Lansdowne, the Viceroy, on 25 August 1893 that this movement "makes all combinations of the Hindus

and the Mohammedans impossible, and so cuts at the root of the Congress agitation for the formation of a united Indian people". The 'divide and rule' policy was not confined to Hindu and Muslim differences only. An effort was made to turn the traditional feudal classes against the new intelligentsia, province against province, caste against caste, and group against group. Attempts were also made to create a split in the nationalist ranks by adopting a more friendly approach towards the more conservative or moderate sections. In the 1870's and the 1880's the leaders belonging to the older associations like the British Indian Association were sought to be appeased and turned against the 'radical' Congress leaders. In the 1890's efforts were made to separate the radicals of yesterday—W. C. Bonnerjea, Justice Ranade, Gokhale and others—from leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji and Surendra Nath Banerjea who came to be considered as extremists. After 1905, when differences arose between the Moderates and the Extremists inside the Congress, the British rulers made a determined effort to create a split.

The British authorities also followed a policy of apparent concessions on the one hand and ruthless repression on the other to put down the growth of nationalism. The more moderate sections of the nationalist opinion were appeased by making concessions on the maximum age of recruitment to the Indian Civil Service, providing larger openings to Indians in other Government services, widening the scope of local municipal government, and passing the Indian Councils Act of 1892. Simultaneously, a policy of repression was followed to frighten the weak-hearted. Elgin, the Viceroy, openly threatened Indians in 1898 with the declaration, "India was conquered by the sword and by the sword it shall be held." Already as we have seen, a powerful attack was launched on the nationalists in Western India with the arrest of Tilak and other newspapermen. In 1898 laws were enacted curbing

the freedom of the Press and speech and increasing the powers of the police and the magistracy.

The British authorities believed that the spread of education had been a major cause of the growth of nationalism. Plans were now set afoot to impose greater government control over it and to change its modern, liberal character. George Hamilton outlined these plans to the Viceroy during 1899. Firstly, he said, the Government should "exercise a greater control over education, its organisation and textbooks". This was sought to be done through the Education Act of 1903 and by keeping strict control over teachers through the system of government inspection of schools and colleges. Secondly, the Government decided to promote private colleges run by religious trusts. Modern secular education, which led to the spread of rational, democratic, and nationalist ideas was sought to be replaced by a system based on religious and moral training. Even though based on Indian religions and glorification of Indian culture, this new system was reactionary as it did not cultivate a forward looking, modern spirit among the young. This policy showed how by the end of the 19th century British imperialism was willing to join hands with the socially and intellectually reactionary and moribund forces. It had no longer any serious objection to revivalism and conservatism. Social and cultural conservatism could be accommodated within the framework of imperial rule. But it feared above all the spread of modern ideas.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Later critics were to point out that the early nationalists did not achieve much practical success. Very few of the reforms for which they agitated were introduced. The alien rulers treated them with contempt and sneered at their politics. As Lajpat

Rai later wrote : "After more than 20 years of more or less futile agitation for concessions and redress of grievances, they had received stones in place of bread." In fact, the Government instead of becoming more liberal had become more reactionary and repressive. Moreover, the early national movement had failed to acquire any roots among the common people and even those who had joined it with high hopes were feeling more and more disillusioned. Its critics ridiculed its politics as 'halting and half-hearted' and its methods as mendicancy or beggary through prayers and petitions. They pointed out that with the exception of a handful, most of the early nationalists had made no personal sacrifice and undergone little personal discomfort. Moreover their programme was confined within the narrow limits of capitalism. They could not visualise India's development except along capitalist lines. This inevitably limited the extent of their appeal among the common people and their capacity to move them to political action.

The critics were, however, not quite correct in declaring the early national movement a failure. No doubt their practical achievements were meagre and their political assumptions and outlook had become outdated by the beginning of the 20th century because of the changes in the character of the British rule. They had failed even to carry out an all-India constitutional agitation. The younger elements were no longer attracted by them and the masses remained untouched by their organisation or propaganda. And, by 1905, they had reached the limits of their political growth.

But, historically viewed, the political record of the early nationalists is not all that bleak. On the contrary, it is quite bright if the immense difficulties of the task they had undertaken are kept in view. In fact, it was their very achievements in the wider sense that led later to the more advanced stages of the national movement and made their own approach histori-

cally obsolete. Thus the early nationalists represented the most progressive force of the times. They made possible a decisive shift in Indian politics.

They succeeded in creating a wide political awakening and in arousing among the middle- and lower-middle class Indians and the intelligentsia the feeling that they belonged to one common nation—the Indian nation. They made the people of India conscious of the bonds of common political, economic, and cultural interests and of the existence of a common enemy in imperialism and thus helped to weld them in a common nationality. They popularised among the people the ideas of democracy and civil liberty. It was in the course of the buiding up of the National Congress and other popular and nationalist associations that the Indians acquired a practical knowledge of democracy at a time when the rulers constantly told them that they were fit only for 'benevolent' or 'oriental' despotism. Moreover, a large number of nationalist political workers were trained in the art of modern politics, and the people familiarised with the concepts and ideas of modern politics.

Most of all they did pioneering work in mercilessly exposing the true character of British imperialism in India. They linked nearly every important economic question with the politically dependent status of the country. And, therefore, even though they were moderate in politics and political methods, they successfully brought to light the most important political and economic aspect of the Indian reality—that India was being ruled by a foreign power for the purposes of economic exploitation. Any regime is politically secure only so long as the people have a basic faith in its benevolent character or they are at least willing to acquiese in its continuation. This provides legitimacy to the regime; this is its moral foundation. The economic agitation of the early nationalists competely

undermined this moral foundation of British rule. It corroded popular confidence in its benevolent character, in both its good results as well as its good intentions. Once, in this period of intellectual unrest, this basic task had been performed, it was inevitable that the radical exposure of British imperialism would spread to the political field. The struggle, the broadening of its social base, the radicalisation of its social, economic and political goals, the involvement and induction of the masses, and the organisation of mass movements could and did come later. Once the main issues were clarified, any mistakes in the understanding of the forces and tactics of political struggle could always be corrected with reference precisely to these issues. This crucial, preliminary character of their own political work was fully recognised by the early nationalists. For example, in a letter to D. E. Wacha dated 12 January 1905, Dadabhai Naoroji wrote:

> The very discontent and impatience it (the Congress) has evoked against itself as slow and non-progressive among the rising generation are among its best results or fruits. It is its own evolution and progress...(the task is) to evolve the required revolution—whether it would be peaceful or violent. The character of the revolution will depend upon the wisdom or unwisdom of the British Government and action of the British people.

The period from 1858 to 1905 was the seed-time of Indian nationalism; and the early nationalists sowed the seeds well and deep. Instead of basing their nationalism on appeals to shallow sentiments and passing emotions, or abstract rights of freedom and liberty, or on obscurantist appeals to the past, they rooted it in a hard-headed and penetrating analysis of the complex mechanism of modern imperialism and the

chief contradiction between the interests of the Indian people and British rule. The result was that they evolved a common political and economic programme which united rather than divided the different sections of the people. Later on, the Indian people could gather around this programme and wage powerful struggles.

It can, therefore, be said that in spite of their many failures, the early nationalists laid strong foundations for the national movement to grow upon and that they deserve a high place among the makers of modern India. As Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the last of the great Moderates, put it, while evaluating the role of the founding fathers of Indian nationalism :

> Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying. That is the place which it has pleased Providence to assign to us in this struggle, and our responsibility is ended when we have done the work which belongs to that place. It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes; we, of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures. For, hard though it be, out of those failures the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks.

III THE ERA OF MILITANT NATIONALISM

DURING THE LATTER HALF of the 19th century political consciousness of the people had been growing steadily. But the leaders failed to obtain any concessions from the British rulers. At the same time the colonial exploitation of the country continued.

Lacking adequate opportunities in business and commerce, the young educated middle class turned more and more to the public services and the legal profession. Some of the more enterprising took to journalism, Opportunities in the public services were strictly limited. In 1903, for example, only sixteen thousand Indians held posts at salaries higher than Rs. 75 a month. In the legal profession failures were frequent and journalism was, at that time, a pretty precarious profession. The real crux of the problem was, however, not the number of unemployed graduates, but the huge wastage arising from failures at examinations. It was among these 'unemployable' young men that frustration was most prevalent.

By the turn of the century the general mood of discontent had spread to the rural gentry, the peasantry and the workers. It is not surprising, therefore, that the moderate leaders who went on pleading with the Government for reforms were beginning to be less and less popular. The inevitable happened. The situation threw up a large number of new leaders who were more radical in their demands and who believed in a more militant form of nationalism. They came to be called Extremists. While the main support for the moderate leaders had come from the intelligentsia and the urban middle class, the new leaders who

emerged appealed to a wider circle of the lower middle classes, the students, and even a section of the workers and peasants.

The early intellectual leadership was provided by persons such as Rajnarain Bose and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in Bengal and Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar in Maharashtra. Bankim's hymn to motherland began with *Bandemataram* which later became a stirring call of patriotism and self-sacrifice.

It must also be remembered that the experience gained during the early phase of the national movement had given stature and maturity to the leaders. They had grown in self-respect and self-confidence. They felt they had the capacity to govern themselves; they had acquired a faith in the future development of their country. Swami Vivekananda was not a political leader but he too repeatedly emphasized the need for a firm belief in one's own strength. He declared :

> If there is a sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, weakness is sin, weakness is death... And here is the test of truth...anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it, it cannot be true.

Vivekananda was the first to speak openly and courageously against day-dreaming about the glories of the past. He wanted the Indian nation to build the future with firmness and vision. "When, O Lord," he asked, "shall our land be free from this eternal dwelling upon the past ?" Though a religious leader, he declared that religion was not for empty bellies and it must contribute to human welfare.

Events in many foreign countries during this period also helped to generate among the Indian people a militant nationalism. Especially the emergence of Japan as a modern, powerful country after 1868, gave a new hope to Indians. Japan had

proved that even a backward Asian country could, through its own efforts become strong without help or assistance from the West. In less than 50 years Japan had become an industrial nation and a strong military power. She had introduced primary education for all and set up an efficient, modern administration. Here was an example for India to follow. Similarly, the defeat Italy suffered at the hands of Ethiopia in 1896 and the victory of Japan over Russia in 1905 proved false all claims of white superiority over other peoples.

The fight of the people in Ireland, Russia, Egypt, Turkey and China for freedom proved to the Indian people that a united nation, prepared to suffer for its principles, could fight against even the most powerful government.

The most outstanding leader among the Extremists was Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Later, he came to be known as Lokmanya Tilak. Tilak was born in 1866. He graduated from the Bombay University and devoted his entire life to the service of the country. Tilak made excellent use of his great flair for journalism to mould public opinion in favour of his political aims and objectives. Along with G. G. Agarkar he founded two newspapers, one in English called the *Maratha*, and the other in Marathi called the *Kesari*.

From 1889 he himself edited the *Kesari* and the paper became the most eloquent champion of the nationalist cause. Tilak wrote and spoke asking the people to be unafraid and selfless, proud and self-confident. He reorganized the traditionalist Ganesh festivals and introduced Shivaji festivals to popularise nationalist ideas among the common people.

Tilak was the first to advise peasants in Maharashtra to withhold payment of land revenues when their crops failed owing to drought or famine or pestilence. He called for Swadeshi and boycott of British goods when Elgin, the Viceroy imposed an excise duty on Indian mill-made cloth.

Not unexpectedly the British authorities began to be worried. They arrested Tilak in 1897 and charged him with spreading hatred and disaffection against the Government. His defence was bold and unflinching. He refused to apologise and accepted with pride rigorous imprisonment for 18 months. His example and sacrifice had an electrifying effect. He became the living symbol of the new nationalism.

In addition to Lokmanya Tilak, leaders such as Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Lala Lajpat Rai were the chief exponents of this militant school of nationalism. Their programme had three aspects. Firstly they wanted the Indians themselves to work for and obtain their freedom and make a determined effort to rise above the degraded position they were forced to occupy under foreign rule. For the fulfilment of this goal no sacrifice was too great, no suffering too much. Therefore, they pleaded for courage, self-confidence and a spirit of sacrifice. Secondly, they repudiated as totally false the suggestion that India needed the 'benevolent guidance' and assistance of foreigners. They hated foreign rule and they firmly proclaimed that Swaraj or full independence was the only goal worth fighting for. Lastly, they had an abiding faith in the strength of the masses and they prepared to win freedom through mass action.

THE PARTITION OF BENGAL AND THE BENGALI RESPONSE

When Curzon entered the scene, the ferment of extremism had already begun to work. His policy only quickened its growth. He attacked the cherished ideals of local self-government, educational autonomy and freedom of the Press. He curtailed the number of Indians in the Calcutta Corporation. He increased the official control over the Indian universities in the name of educational reforms. A university commission set up by him

recommended abolition of second-grade colleges and law classes, increase of fees, reduction of the terms and numbers of the senators, tighter control of the education department and wide powers over affiliation. Abolition of the law classes and second-grade colleges would not only mean less employment for the Indians who ran them and taught in them, but also fewer opportunities for Indians to acquire higher education and to enter the legal profession. Enhancement of fees would block the road of the poor to clerical and teaching jobs. The Moderates opposed the bill but Curzon made few concessions. The demand for national education grew louder.

His Indian Official Secrets (Amendment) Act aimed at protecting the oppressive officials from public criticism. It seemed to be a continuation of Lytton's policy and turned the Press more nationalist than before. He spent Indian money lavishly on foreign missions, the Delhi Durbar and the Tibetan expedition. He refused to reduce the land tax. Finally came the partition of Bengal. It was ostensibly for better administration of an unwieldy province but really for curbing the radical Bengali nationalists. Administrative convenience and development of Assam were the avowed objects of the plan. But politics had crept in. The officials talked of freeing the eastern districts from 'the pernicious influence of Calcutta' and 'a juster deal for the Moslems.' They wanted to transfer to East Bengal, Bakharganj and Faridpur which had become hot-beds of extremism.

There was widespread protest. The Congress called the plan 'preposterous'. Two alternatives were suggested—either put Bengal under a Governor, or separate the Hindi- and Oriya-speaking peoples without dividing the Bengali-speaking ones. Curzon brushed the protest aside as empty rhetoric of the Bengali *babus*. It only proved that partition had become politically desirable, and, if the Government yielded, a source of

increasing trouble would be cemented on the eastern flank of India.

During his visit to East Bengal in February 1904 he enlarged the first scheme. Bengal was now to lose fifteen districts altogether and her population would be reduced to 54 million. Risely wrote : "Bengal united is a power. Bengal divided will pull several different ways...one of our main objects is to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule". Lord Hardinge admitted later that "the desire to aim a blow at the Bengalis overcame other considerations". But the official designs were to be submerged under the united protest of all section of the Bengalis—zamindars, lawyers, merchants, the city poor, the workers and, above all, the students. The sentiments of a very sensitive and proud section of the Indian people had been rudely trampled upon.

THE ANTI-PARTITION MOVEMENT

Curzon got the unwilling consent of the Secretary of State and published the plan in July 1905 and found that he had brought about a unity which he had tried to destroy. The anti-partition movement was the work of all sections of the Bengali people and the entire national leadership. Moderates, such as Surendranath Banerjea took the initiative at the early stages but more extremist elements such as Bipin Chandra Pal, Aswini Kumar Dutta and Aurobindo Ghosh soon secured control over the movement. It was chiefly an urban movement though it touched the rural people.

It began with a mammoth meeting at the Town Hall, Calcutta, on 7 August 1905, when the resolution on boycott of British goods was adopted. 16 October, when the partition was made effective, was called a day of national mourning. There was

a general hartal. People fasted and went bare foot to take a bath in the Ganga, shouting *Bandemataram* and singing patriotic songs. Hindus and Muslims tied *rakhi* to one another's wrists as a symbol of the fraternity of all Bengalis.

Rabindranath's Swadeshi songs gave expression to the people's anguish and anger. In every note they breathed a poignant love for the land and the people going to be divided. The Bengalis rose like one man to resist, to suffer and to sacrifice. Mofussil districts, such as Barisal and Mymensingh, were soon caught in the fire of patriotism. Gokhale, presiding over the Benaras Congress, referred to the partition as 'a cruel wrong' and "a complete illustration of the worst features of the present system of bureaucratic rule its utter contempt for public opinion, its arrogant pretensions to superior wisdom, its reckless disregard of the most cherished feeling of the people...its cool preference of service interests to those of the governed".

The ideas of Swadeshi and boycott, born of the popular feelings in 1905, were not new. The Americans, the Irish and the Chinese had adopted them before. Swadeshi, as a purely economic measure for the development of Indian industry, had been preached by Gopalrao Deshmukh, G. V. Joshi and M. G. Ranade of Maharashtra and Rajnarain Bose, Nabagopal Mitra and the Tagore family of Bengal. Similarly, Bholanath Chandra had recommended boycott in the 1870's to bring economic pressure on the British public. Tilak had led a full-fledged boycott campaign in 1896. It was realized that Swadeshi and boycott were complementary. One would not succeed without the other.

These old concepts got a new impetus from the anti-partition movement. But it also brought to the open differences between the Moderates and the Extremists. The Bombay Moderates were against the idea of boycott as a general political weapon, though they welcomed Swadeshi. Gokhale would leave

alone the word 'boycott' which implied 'a vindictive desire to injure another' and 'which created unnecessary ill-will against ourselves'. Surendranath Banerjea considered boycott a special measure for fighting an immediate injustice. He hoped that it would cease to be used when the partition was annulled. Lajpat Rai was more radical. The attention of the British, he said, would only be forced to the grievances of Indians by directly threatening their pockets. To Tilak, Pal and Aurobindo boycott had many implications. It was an economic pressure on Manchester, a weapon of political agitation against imperialism and a training in self-sufficiency for the attainment of Swaraj.

For the time being, the differences were muted. The anti-partition agitation grew into the Swadeshi movement which gave cohesion and vigour to scattered and timid forces. The events in Bengal shook the belief of many Congress leaders in the justice of the British people and the efficacy of moderate methods of constitutional agitation through memorials, meetings and news-paper articles. Swadeshi brought into politics new classes of people without distinction of caste and creed. It taught the Press to be outspoken, students to rebel, Hindus and Muslims to co-operate, and people to reflect on their political and economic condition, to shed fear, to defy authority and to welcome lathi-charge, prison or even the gallows as honours won in the service of the country.

The Benaras Congress made an emphatic protest against the partition of Bengal and the repressive measures adopted by the Government. It endorsed Swadeshi and boycott for Bengal. It did not, however, approve of a boycott for the whole of India. But Lajpat Rai asked other provinces to follow the example of Bengal, and Tilak stressed that the basic goal of Swadeshi, boycott and national education was the attainment of Swaraj. The call for boycott and Swadeshi was given at thousands

of public meetings all over Bengal and in most of the major cities and towns of India. It had two aspects. On the one hand, British wares were burnt at public places and shops selling them were picketed; on the other, a vigorous drive was made for the production and sale of Swadeshi goods. The confectioners vowed against using foreign sugar, washermen against washing foreign clothes, priests against performing *pujas* with foreign materials. Women of the Deccan and Bengal gave up foreign bangles and glass utensils. Students refused to use foreign paper. Even doctors and pleaders refused to patronise dealers in British manufactures. Picketing was combined with the traditional mode of social ostracism. In some places, such as Barisal, merchants voluntarily gave up salt and cloth to be destroyed, for which they invited the wrath of the punitive police.

On the positive side, the movement gave a stimulus to cottage industries and even large-scale enterprises of various sorts. Swadeshi textile mills, match and soap factories, potteries and tanneries sprouted up everywhere. Acharya P. C. Ray set up his Bengal Chemicals Factory, which became famous in a very short time, Gurudev Tagore himself helped in setting up a Swadeshi store. The entire capital of the Tata Iron and Steel Company which had refused all Government and foreign help, was subscribed by Indians within three months. Many zamindars and merchants joined hands with political leaders to found banks and insurance companies. Even steamship concerns were floated.

The Swadeshi movement activated new movements in the realm of culture also. A new type of nationalist poetry, prose and journalism, surcharged with passion and filled with idealism, was born. The patriotic songs composed at that time by poets such as Rabindranath Tagore, Rajani Kanta Sen, and Mukunda Das were not only topically effective but had a literary quality

of permanent value, They are sung in Bengal to this day. Political journalism which resulted from the Swadeshi and national movements produced some classic testaments on freedom, liberty and self-reliance.

Tilak carried to Western India the cult of boycott and Swadeshi. He led a great *bon fire* of foreign cloth at Poona. He opened cc-operative stores as the head of the Swadeshi Wastu Pracharini Sabha. He exhorted the Bombay mill-owners to supply dhotis at moderate rates. A Swadeshi Weaving Company was formed at Poona.

A wave of agitation swept Punjab against the use of foreign sugar, the import of which had largely reduced domestic manufacture and cane production. Merchants of Rawalpindi vowed not to deal in it and the Brahmin priests of Multan banned all temple offerings containing it. The movement spread to Hardwar, Delhi, Kangra and Jammu. Syed Haidar Reza was the moving spirit of Swadeshi in Delhi. Chidambaram Pillai founded the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company in Tuticorin on the east coast of the Madras Province.

THE GROWTH OF MILITANT NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The spirit of Swadeshi wanted the people to educate themselves on national lines. The scheme of national education had been formulated by Satish Chandra Mukerjee, the editor of the *Dawn* in 1898. The British system of education was regarded as anti-national. It called for a soulless memorization of alien knowledge which had no relation to Indian conditions and culture. The medium of English killed the joy of learning, discouraged free thought and prevented creative writing. Rabindranath Tagore had shown the way by founding Santiniketan. Curzon's Indian Universities Act and the Carlyle

Circular to District Magistrates prohibiting students' participation in political demonstrations prompted the establishment of the National Council of Education. The Bengal National College was founded in 1906 with Aurobindo as Principal. Science and technology found their due place in its curriculum but emphasis was placed on things Indian. It aimed to produce Indian scientists, historians and industrialists but more at stimulating patriotism. It was to prepare the cultural soil on which liberty could thrive. The regional Indian language was to be the chief medium of instruction. The Bengal Technical Institute emphasized technical education which had so long been neglected. Students were sent on scholarships to Japan to learn advanced methods. Scores of national schools came up all over the country.

Tagore preached the cult of self-reliance—*atmasakti*, the main plank of which was social and economic regeneration of the villages. While Aswini Kumar Dutta tried to give it a practical shape in Barisal by abolition of the caste disabilities of the Namasudras and other evils like early marriage, the dowry system and heavy drinking, the Extremists as a whole considered political independence as more important. "Our nation is like a tree", wrote Tilak in the *Kesari*, "of which the original trunk was Swarajya and branches were Swadeshi and boycott." Swadeshi in fact led to Swaraj. Hence the movement was to be widened from an anti-partition agitation into a passive resistance campaign against all forms of foreign rule. It was to mean not only boycott of British goods and schools but of law-courts, municipalities and Legislative Councils; in short, all association with the Government. By striking at the root of British prestige its enchantment was to be dispelled. Administration was to be made impossible by an organized refusal to help British commerce to exploit and British bureaucracy to oppress the Indian people.

Before the Extremists could capture the Congress for an all-out struggle, they had to bring the peasants and the workers into the movement. The message of Swadeshi began to reach the masses, and, because of its direct relevance to their own welfare and prosperity it made sense to them in a way in which theoretical and abstract political concepts could not. They would have responded more vigorously perhaps if the Extremists had called upon the peasants to start a no-rent campaign or the workers to strike against the capitalists. Although this was not done, the role of the peasants and the workers was significant. The indigo ryots of Champaran in Bihar rose in rebellion. Disturbances took place in Assam and Mymensingh. Aswini Kumar Dutta led the Muslim peasants of Barisal in their agitations. A wave of strikes broke out in Bengal engulfing the East Indian Railway, the Clive Jute Mills and the iron works and presses. The port of Calcutta was paralysed for some time. Tilak made an appeal to Bombay workers which almost succeeded in resulting in a general strike after his arrest. Chidambaram Pillai organized a strike of the Tuticorin Coral Mill.

But the brunt of the fight fell on the youth of the country. Inspired by the radical press, like the *Sandhya*, the *Jugantar*, the *Kesari* and the *Punjabi*, they jumped into the fray. There was an element of despair in the involvement of students, clerks and teachers. They formed national volunteer groups in every town of Bengal. Wearing yellow turbans and red shirts, they marched out of Government schools, colleges and offices in thousands, shouting *Bandemataram*, singing national songs, picketing shops or selling Swadeshi goods. The schools and colleges, the students of which took an active part in the movement, lost Government grants or University affiliation. Their students were debarred from scholarships and jobs under the Government. A reign of terror was let loose in Eastern Bengal and Assam. Boys were fined, expelled and severely beaten. Kingsford, the English

Presideney Magistrate of Calcutta, ordered the flogging of a mere boy of fourteen. A similar lot befell boys as far off as Amravati or Kohlapur. Repression led to anger and anger to active participation in terrorist activities.

The Muslims took part in large numbers in the beginning and women came out of *purdah* for the first time to join processions or picketing. Liakat Hossain of Patna was one of the earliest to suggest boycott. He was an organiser of the East Indian Railway strike. His fiery Urdu pamphlets roused Muslim sentiments. Abdul Rasul presided over the Barisal Conference which was broken up by a police charge. Abdul Halim Guznavi, a zamindar and a lawyer, started Swadeshi industries and led the boycott of British leather goods. Abdul Kalam Azad met Aurobindo and helped to extend revolutionary work outside Bengal. Though some of the Extremists unwisely alienated Muslims through over-enthusiasm and over-emphasis on Hindu religious symbols, leaders such as Surendranath Banerjea, Aswini Kumar Dutta and Rabindranath Tagore repeatedly stressed Hindu-Muslim unity.

The repressive methods of the Government, especially the brutal assault on the delegates to the Barisal Conference, strengthened the resolve of the Extremists to carry on the struggle. At the Calcutta Congress (1906), Dadabhai Naoroji placated extremist sentiment by declaring that the goal of the Congress was to be "Self-Government or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the colonies". The Extremists interpreted Swaraj in their own way. The tempo of the movement rose with the deportation of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh of Punjab and the prosecution of the *Sandhya* and the *Bandemataram* for publishing seditious articles. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, editor of the fire-eating *Sandhya* died during his trial. Bipin Chandra Pal was in jail. Tempers did not cool with the release of Lajpat Rai and talk of reforms. The radical wing of Tilak and Aurobindo decided

on a showdown when the venue of the Congress was shifted from Poona to Surat and Tilak's claim to the presidency was rejected for that of Rashbehari Bose. The Moderates' attempt to water down the resolution on boycott proved to be the last straw. The Surat Congress broke up in chaos. The nationalists had been split into two warring camps which weakened the movement.

While Tilak was still for responsive cooperation, Aurobindo resolved upon aggressive resistance of the Russian terriorist type. What he meant became clear with the Bomb attacks in Muzaffarpur and the discovery of the hideout of the terrorists at Maniktala. Tilak lent it moral support in the *Kesari*. "If the administration was Russianized," he wrote, "people must take to Russian methods." He was sentenced to six years' transportation to Mandalay. Paranjpye, editor of the *Kal* was jailed for nineteen months. Nine Bengali leaders were deported. Chidambaram Pillai of Madras and Harisarvottama Rao of Andhra were imprisoned. The Government censored all newspapers, prohibited mass meetings and started prosecutions against the revolutionary associations. With Aurobindo's escape to Pondicherry and his decision to give up politics and the national movement for religion, the open movement came to an end.

The militant nationalists had added a glorious chapter to the history of the national movement. They had clarified its objectives, taught people self-confidence and self-reliance and prepared the social base of the movement to include the lower middle classes, students, youth and women. New methods of political organization and new modes of waging political struggles had been introduced. At the same time certain old weaknesses had persisted. The mass of the common people, the workers and the peasants, were still outside the mainstream of national politics. In spite of heroic talk of efforts at organizing mass struggles, such struggles were on the while absent. Passive resistance and non-cooperation remained mere ideas. The task of finding effective forms

of political struggle was still unfulfilled and the country was still without an effective nationalist organization. Nor was the boundary of capitalism transcended. Tilak and others still saw social and economic development as bounded by capitalist enterprise. Lastly, unlike the early moderate nationalists, the militant nationalists did not realize the full significance of India being a country with many religions, castes and regions. While their militant anti-imperialism meant a great leap in national consolidation, the upper caste and Hindu tinge they imparted to it weakened the process of national unification and was to contribute to the bitter harvest of communalism in later years.

THE RISE AND GROWTH OF REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM

In spite of the vigour and comprehensiveness of the national movement, the partition of Bengal was not repealed. Instead the Government became even more repressive than before. These two facts had an immediate effect on the minds of the impatient young who were in a rebellious mood. Even prior to the Bengal partition movement, Tilak, the leader of the extremist group, had inflamed the tempers of some of his younger followers sufficiently to lead them to individual acts of terrorism. As early as 1897, two brothers Damodar and Balkrishna Chapekar of Poona, had assassinated two unpopular British officers. Later, Aurobindo Ghosh had actually planned some revolutionary activities. The events following the partition of Bengal, accentuated the revolutionary impulses of many young Indians. They took to the bomb and the pistol and individual acts of terrorism. They lost all faith in constitutional agitation, or even in passive resistance. The British, they felt, must be over-thrown by force. The *Jugantar* expressed their credo in an editorial published on 22 April 1906, after the Barisal Conference was

broken up by the police, "The remedy lies with the people themselves. The 30 crores of people inhabiting India must raise their 60 crores of hands to stop this curse of oppression. Force must be stopped by force."

But these young terrorists, however, did not try to plan or organize a revolution based on violence and involving the whole country with the masses participating. They preferred to follow in the footsteps of the Irish terrorists and the Russian Nihilists and assassinate individual officials, who either because of their anti-Indian attitude or because of their repressive actions, had become unpopular. The idea was to strike terror in the hearts of the rulers and thus to arouse the people politically and ultimately to drive the British out of India. By its very nature the planning and organization, the recruitment and training had to be secret underground activities. Many secret societies were set up, especially in Bengal and Maharashtra. Some of them functioned under the guise of physical culture clubs or associations. Of these the Anusilan Samitis of Calcutta and Dacca, the *Jugantar* of Calcutta and *Mitramela* started by the Savarkar brothers in Maharashtra, became the quite well-known. When V. D. Savarkar went abroad, his elder brother Ganesh started the Abhinava Bharat Society, which soon had many branches all over Western India.

Public attention was seriously drawn to revolutionary terrorism by an attempt on the life of Kingsford, now the District Judge of Muzaffarpur, by two young men, Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki. The bomb, however, killed two innocent ladies. Khudiram was caught and Prafulla committed suicide rather than surrender. A conspiracy case was started at Alipur against Aurobindo, his brother Barin and others, which was interrupted by the killing of the approver by the revolutionary terrorists within the jail compound. The officers in charge of the investigation and the prosecution were also assassinated one by one.

While Aurobindo was acquitted, four others, including his brother Barin were deported to the Andamans and several others sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Khudiram was hanged and Satyen Basu and Kanai Dutta who had killed the approver met with a similar fate.

In Maharashtra Nasik, Bombay and Poona became centres of bomb-manufacture. An attempt was made on the Viceroy's life. Jackson, District Magistrate of Nasik, was shot at a farewell party. Even before this, M.L. Dhingra killed Curzon-Wyllie, an official of the India Office in London as a protest against the inhuman transportations and hangings of young Indians. He was executed. "The only lesson," he wrote before death, "required in India is to learn how to die and the only way to teach it is by dying alone."

In Madras Province the people were excited by the eloquent speeches of Bipin Chandra Pal. Chidambaram Pillai openly spoke of absolute independence. His arrest led to a serious riot in Tuticorin and Tinnevelly in which the police opened fire on a defiant crowd. Ashe, who had ordered the firing at Tinnevelly, was assassinated by Vanchi Aiyar of the Bharatha Matha Association. Unable to escape, Vanchi Aiyar shot himself.

The secret organizations of Punjab thrived on repeated famines and increase of land revenue and irrigation taxes. The settlers of the canal colonies apprehended restrictions on ownership rights. The *begar* system caused irritation. Incidents in Bengal further inflamed the Punjabis. The 50th anniversary of the Revolt of 1857 was approaching and speeches frequently called upon the Sikh regiments to revolt. Assaults on Europeans took place at Lahore and riots broke out in Rawalpindi following the prosecution of Lajpat Rai's *Punjabi*. Ajit Singh was the heart and soul of this movement and he was helped by Aga Haider and Syed Hyder Riza. Deportation of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh quietened things for a while.

Rashbehari Bose, then a clerk at Dehra Dun, became the link between Bengal and Punjab. One of the bombs prepared in Bengal was thrown at the Viceroy Lord Hardinge, as he was entering Delhi on 23 December 1912, to prove that the repression-and-reforms policy would not pay. Rashbehari Bose's *Liberty* pamphlets, along with the *Jugantar* pamphlets, continued the traditions of the revolutionary press.

Some of the terrorist revolutionaries went abroad and established centres in Europe. They planned to obtain the help of countries which were not friendly to Britain or to collect arms and send them to their comrades in India secretly. Shyamji Krishna Varma, V. D. Savarkar and Lala Hardayal went to London. In Europe Madame Cama and Ajit Singh were prominent.

The terrorists added a colourful and inspiring chapter to the history of our freedom movement. Their desperate deeds and daring plans, cool action and indifference to death won them a lasting place in the memory of the nation. But with all their idealism and suffering, they were bound to fail. Acts of individual violence, however heroic, cannot mobilize the masses, and could be easily dealt with by an imperialism at its zenith. A series of conspiracy cases, stern penalties and harsh laws broke their back. The Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Explosive Substances Act and the Indian Press Act were added to the armoury of the bureaucracy. Secondly, most of the time the terrorists were working at cross-purposes without a common plan and a central leadership. Thirdly, they had no base among the people. For one thing, being secret organizations, they could not take the people into their confidence. It should also be remembered that the *samitis* were filled with men of the middle class intelligentsia out of touch with the peasants and the workers. The Moderates openly disowned them and many Extremists were reluctant to accept them.

But no sacrifice so total, can entirely go waste. The country

brooded over the memory of the martyrs for 'they gave us back the pride of our manhood'.

MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS

For the time being the militant nationalists and the revolutionaries forced the Government to think of conciliatory steps. Along with stern measures of repression, the Government tried to encourage Muslim separatism and to separate the Moderates from the Extremists by constitutional reforms. Minto Curzon's successor as Viceroy had decided to play the game of 'Divide and Rule'. A deputation of Muslim leaders, led by the Aga Khan, met him at Simla in October 1905 and secured from him a promise of communal electorates and weightage. When the Morley-Minto Reforms came at last in 1909, their terms pleased very few.

An Indian was to be appointed a member of the Governor-General's Executive Council and of each of the Provincial Executive Councils. The strength of the Imperial and the Provincial Legislative Councils was raised but their character remained unchanged. An official majority was retained at the Centre, where only 27 members out of a maximum of 60 were to be elected through a very narrow electorate. Though non-officials were in a majority in the Provincial Legislatures, the nominated members usually voted with the officials against the elected. There were three main types of electorate for the Central Legislature : (1) general, consisting of non-official members of the Provincial Legislative Councils; (2) class, such as Muslims and landholders; and (3) special, like the Universities and Chambers of Commerce. The greater part of the non-official members in the Provincial Councils were to be elected by groups of local bodies, landholders, traders and Universities. Muslims,

landlords and European capitalists got reserved seats. Women had no vote. The Governors and the Governor-General could exclude any person as politically undesirable.

The powers of the Legislatures were limited. Only the member who had asked a question could ask a supplementary. Important areas of public interest, such as the Army and the Native States, were excluded from debate and resolution. Discussion and voting on separate heads of the budget were allowed but no resolution or voting was permitted on the whole budget.

The Moderates had been willing to compromise but felt cheated by Morley who denied that the reforms had ever been meant to introduce a Parliamentary form of government. The arbitrary powers of disqualification, the narrow franchise, the official majority at the Centre and the hoax of non-official majorities in the Provinces, the restriction on debate and the limited power of influencing the budget disillusioned the Moderates. They could only act as a sterile opposition. The Congress as a party disapproved of communal electorates. The majority of Congressmen lost faith in the Moderate approach. The Extremists made a fierce political attack on the Moderates whose influence rapidly waned. The encouragement to Muslim separatism made the task of organizing a broad-based national movement uniting all the Indian people irrespective of their religion, caste or language more difficult. The real purpose of the reforms was to divide the nationalist ranks and check the growth of unity among the Indians.

Lord Hardinge tried to placate Indian opinion by annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911. Bihar and Orissa were taken out of Bengal and Assam was made a separate province. At the same time the capital was transferred to Delhi.

If the annulment of partition somewhat soothed the Bengali sentiment, the root causes of unrest had not been tackled. Nor could repression represented by such legislative measures as

the Press Act, 1910 or the Special Tribunals under the Criminal Law Amendment, Act 1908 be expected to check the growth of militant nationalism.

THE RISE AND GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM

Indian nationalism grew and developed during the second half of the 19th century. During this early phase political consciousness among the Muslims lagged behind. Nationalist ideas spread among the Hindu and Parsi middle- and lower middle classes. But not to an equal extent among the Muslims belonging to the same social classes.

Before the British came and gradually set up a foreign government on Indian soil, the Hindu and Muslim masses had on the whole lived together without antipathy or bitterness though there had existed certain religious trends which were exclusive and antagonistic. The divisions of the society were class-wise. There were the rich and the poor; there were the educated and the uneducated; there were the rulers and the ruled. Among these classes and groups there were both Hindus and Muslims. This was so during the Mughal period also. Even at the time of the 1857 Revolt Hindus and Muslims fought together side by side and their anger was directed against the common enemy, the foreign rulers at whose hands all India suffered alike.

After the revolt had been put down, the British were particularly hard on the Musilms because they had come to the conclusion that the revolt was led by the Muslims and that they were primarily responsible for it. It is estimated that in Delhi alone 27,000 Muslims were sentenced to death during the revolt and the short period immediately following. For years the Muslims were viewed with suspicion by the British.

With the rise of the nationalist movement, however, the

British attitude changed. During the 1870's this became more and more noticeable. As everything else the British did or attempted to do this change was politically motivated and was the result of the new tactics the British began following to safeguard their own interests. As the national movement spread and grew there was the threat that it might unite the people and pose serious problems for the Empire. A united people cannot be kept under subjugation for a long time. So in addition to repression and stringent action to control, and, if possible, completely dry-up the rising tide of nationalism, the British decided to do all they could to keep the people disunited and quarrelling and competing among themselves. They decided to divide the people in the name of their different religions and to encourage communal and separatist tendencies in Indian politics. They claimed to be the champions of the Muslim minority and went all out to win over to their side Muslims, zamindars, landlords and the educated middle classes. They also tried to introduce and build up other types of divisions. They talked of Bengali domination and tried to encourage provincialism. They tried to exploit the caste structure of the Indian society and play the non-Brahmins against the Brahmins and the lower castes against the higher castes. By helping the demand to replace Urdu by Hindi in law courts they promoted social and communal bitterness among the Hindus and Muslims of U.P. and Bihar. Thus even legitimate demands of different sections of Indian society and the problems of democratization of the Indian society were exploited to create disharmony among Indians. The Indian social situation was quite complex. In many internal social and cultural questions rights and wrongs were inextricably mixed and had to be carefully and patiently separated. This complexity was utilized by the alien rulers for their own purposes.

The rise of Muslim communalism is associated with the

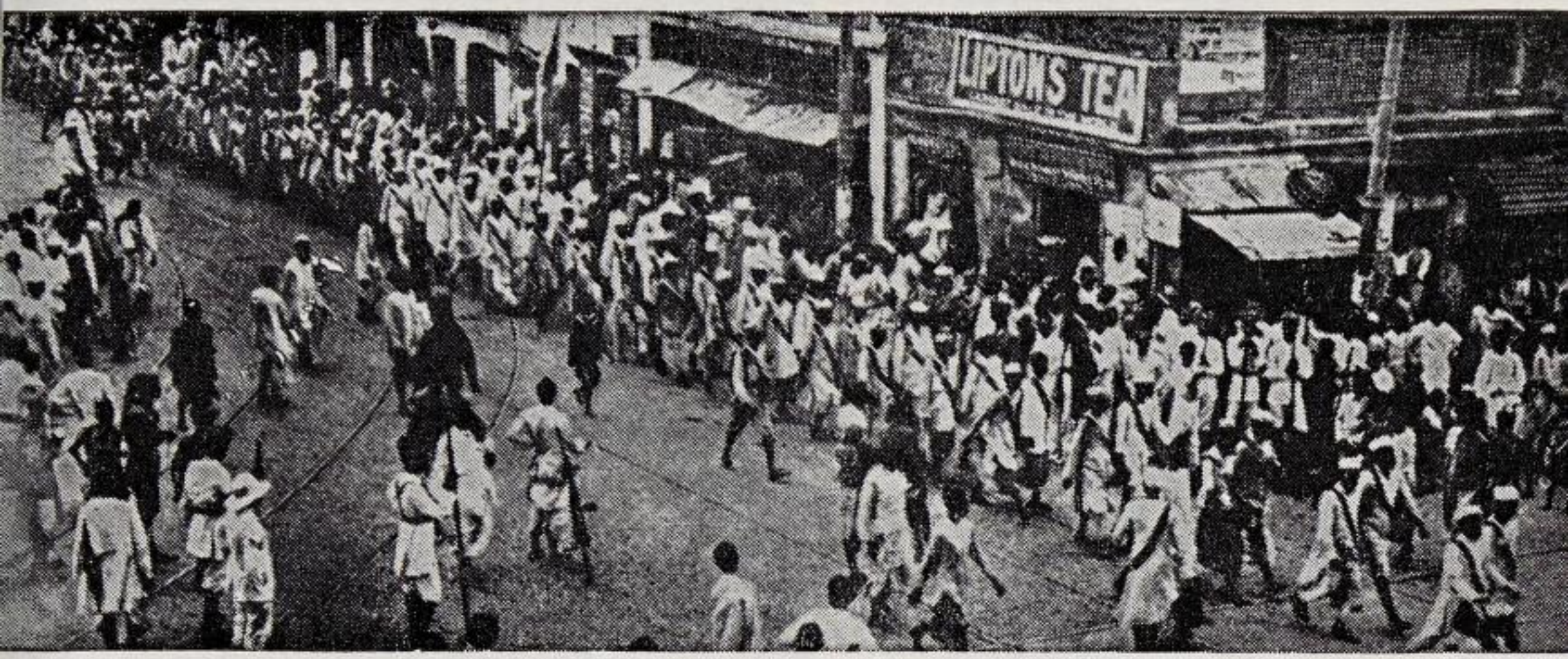
name of Sayyid Ahmed Khan. He began as a great educationist and social reformer. He tried to bring the teaching of the Quran in line with modern ideas and emphasized the value of service. His attitude in the matter led to a sharp conflict between him and leaders of orthodox Islam. During this stage, Sayyid Ahmed believed in the close cooperation of the Hindus and the Muslims. For the establishment of the Mohamedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, he received donations from both Hindus and Muslims. However, with the rise of the Indian National Congress, Sayyid Ahmed became apprehensive about the position of the Muslims, particularly of the Muslim zamindars many of whom had supported him. The British also pulled strings behind the scenes. Sayyid Ahmed Khan now declared that the interests of Hindus and Muslims were different and even opposite. He became a full-fledged loyalist and, when the Indian Congress was founded in 1885, he opposed it and organized, along with Raja Shiva Prasad of Benares, a counter-movement swearing loyalty to the British. He told his followers that if the British withdrew, the Hindu majority would dominate over and be unfair to the Muslim minority. He advised the Muslims not to join the Indian National Congress, though other Muslims leaders such as Badruddin Tyabji, appealed to them to join the new national organization.

The views of Muslim leaders such as Sayyid Ahmed Khan were contrary to facts, and unscientific and irrational. Though Hindus and Muslims believed in their own different religions, they had common economic and political interests. Even socially and culturally, both the masses and the upper classes of Hindus and Muslims had come to have common ways of life. A Bengali Muslim and a Bengali Hindu, for example, had much more in common than a Bengali Muslim and a Punjabi Muslim. What is more important Hindus and Muslims were oppressed and exploited alike by the rulers. Sayyid Ahmed Khan had himself said in 1884 :

Do you not inhabit the same land? Are you not burned and buried on the same soil? Do you not tread the same ground and live upon the same soil? Remember that the words Hindus and Mohammedan are only meant for religious distinction; otherwise all persons, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, even the Christians, who reside in this country, are all in this particular respect belonging to one and the same nation. Then all these different sects can be described as one nation, they must each and all unite for the good of the country which is common to all.

It is, therefore, worth examining how the new way of thinking along communal lines grew among large sections of the Muslims.

This was to some extent due to the relative backwardness of Muslims in education and trade and industry. Muslim upper classes consisted mostly of zamindars and aristocrats. Because the upper class Muslims during the first 70 years of the 19th century were very anti-British, conservative and hostile to modern education, the number of educated Muslims in this country remained very small. Consequently, modern Western thought with its emphasis on science, democracy, and nationalism did not spread among Muslim intellectuals, who remained traditionally backward. Later, as a result of the efforts of Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Nawab Abdul Latif, Badruddin Tyabji and others, modern education spread among Muslims. But the proportion of the educated was far lower among Muslims than among Hindus, Parsees, or Christians. Similarly, the Muslims had also taken little part in the growth of trade and industry. The small number of educated persons and men of trade industry among the Muslims enabled the reactionary big landlords to maintain their influence over the Muslim masses. As we have seen earlier, landlords and zamindars, whether Hindu or Muslim, supported British rule out of self-interest. But, among the



N.C.O. Volunteers parading in the streets of Calcutta, 1921

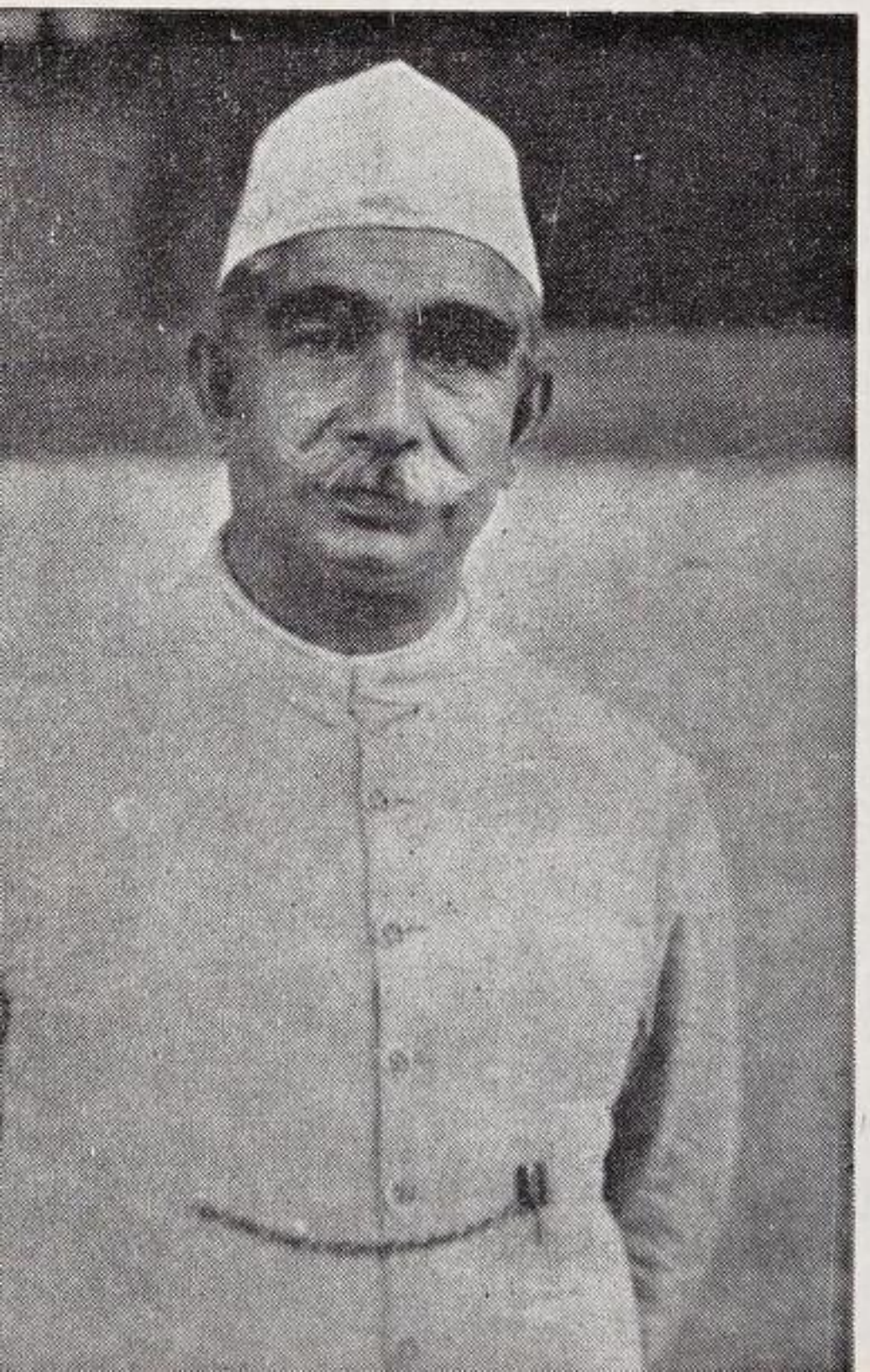
Bonfire of foreign cloth in Bombay

Mohammad Ali

C. Vijayaraghavachariar

M. A. Ansari

Sarojini Naidu



C. R. Dass

Motilal Nehru

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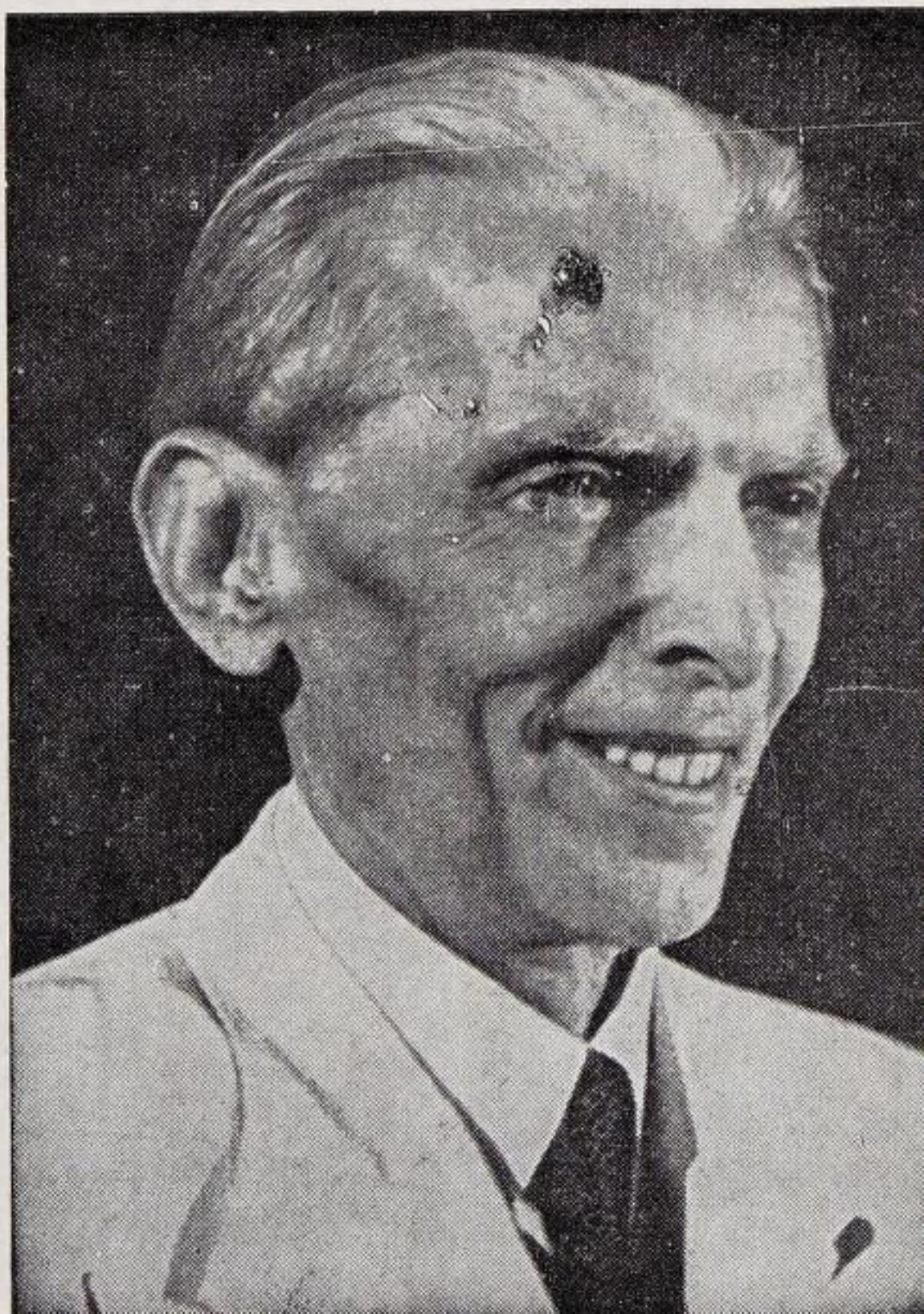
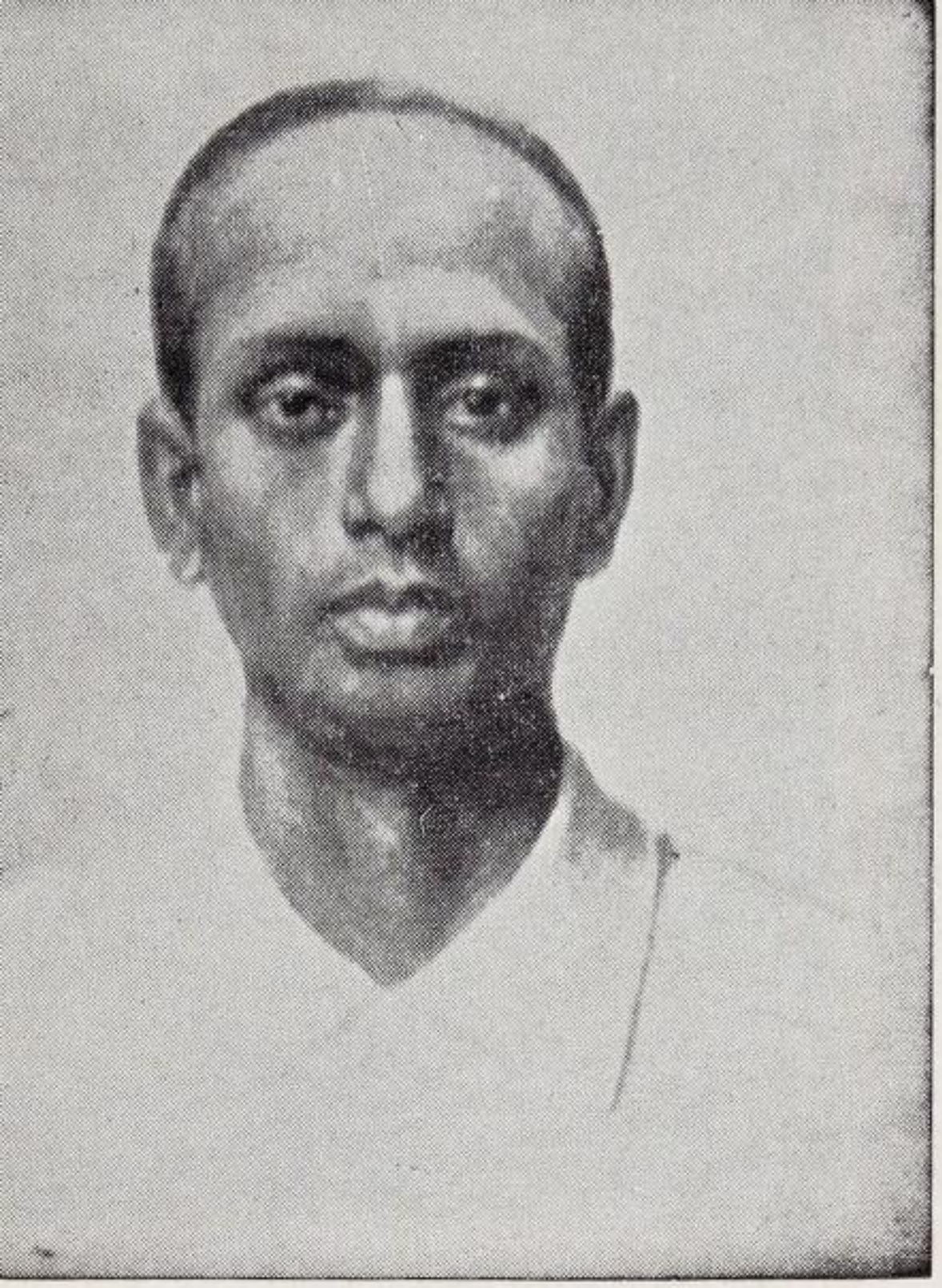


Mohammed Ali Jinnah



Surya Sen

Bhagat Singh

Cellular Jail, Port Blair

Hindus, the modern intellectuals and the rising commercial and industrialist class had pushed out the landlords from leadership. Unfortunately, the opposite remained the case with the Muslims.

The educational backwardness of the Muslims had another harmful consequence. Since modern education was essential for entry into Government service or the professions, the Muslims had also lagged behind the non-Muslims in this respect. Moreover, the Government had consciously discriminated against the Muslims after 1858, holding them largely responsible for the Revolt of 1857. When modern education did spread among the Muslims the educated Muslim found few opportunities in business or the professions. He inevitably looked for Government employment. And, in any case, India being a backward colony, there were very few opportunities of employment for its people. In these circumstances, it was easy for the British officials and the loyalist Muslim leaders to incite the educated Muslims against the educated Hindus. Sayyid Ahmed Khan and others raised the demand for special treatment for the Muslims in the matter of Government service. They declared that if the educated Muslims remained loyal to the British, the latter would reward them with Government jobs and other special favours. Some loyalist Hindus and Parsees too tried to argue in this manner, but they remained a small minority. The result was that while the country as a whole, independent and nationalist lawyers, journalists, students, merchants and industrialists were becoming political leaders, among the Muslims loyalist landlords and retired Government servant still influenced political opinion. Bombay was the only province where the Muslims had taken to commerce and education quite early; and there the Nationalist Congress included in its ranks such brilliant Muslims as Badruddin Tyabji, R. M. Sayani, A. Bhimji, and the young barrister Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Moreover, in Bengal, U.P. and the Punjab also the spread of modern ideas created nationalist wings

among Muslims breaking the monopoly of the loyalist elements in the leadership. We can sum up this aspect of the problem with a quotation from Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India* :

> There has been a difference of a generation or more in the development of the Hindu and Muslim middle classes, and that difference continues to show itself in many directions, political, economic and other. It is this lag which produces a psychology of fear among the Muslims.

There was one other important reason for the growth of a communal way of thinking during the period. Indian history had been presented by British historians with a special slant and, later, their Indian counterparts unfortunately followed in their footsteps, and, wrote and taught in such a way as to arouse and foster communal feelings. For example, the ancient period was identified as the Hindu period and the medieval period as the Muslim period. During the medieval period Turk, Afghan and Mughal dynasties ruled. Instead of explaining the nature of their rule, they were all bundled together as Muslims and the period itself was referred to as the Muslim period. To talk of Muslim rule implied that all rulers were Muslims and all Hindus were the ruled. The actual fact was that the rulers, nobles, chiefs, and zamindars, whether Hindu or Muslim, treated the masses, both Hindu and Muslim, alike, that is, with the same contempt and disregard, as inferior creatures to be made use of for their own benefit. The Muslim masses were as poor and as oppressed by the taxes as the Hindu masses. These historians did not realize that politics in India during the ancient and medieval periods was like politics anywhere else, and followed the dictates of the economic and political interests of the rulers and seldom any religious considerations. No doubt,

both the rulers and the rebels often used religion as an outer colouring to disguise their real material interests and ambitions. But this does not mean that the objectives themselves were religious or communal. Again, the, British and communal historians did not lay stress on the composite culture of India. The cultural pattern of India was, undoubtedly, diverse, but, there was a common thread running through, and, what is more important, the diversity was primarily class-wise and region-wise. By introducing the false concept of distinct and separate Hindu and Muslim cultures the communal approach to history came to generate divisive tendencies. The religious reforms movements also had a similar impact. These movements made an important contribution as they opposed irrational and obscurantist thinking, spread rational and humanistic ideas, weeded out many of the corrupting elements from the 19th century religious beliefs and practices and fostered greater self-respect among the Indian people. At the same time many of them tended to divide Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsees as also high caste Hindus from low caste Hindus. Any over-emphasis on religion in a country of many religions was bound to have a divisive effect. Moreover, the reforms put a one-sided emphasis on the religious and philosophical aspects of cultural heritage. These aspects were not a common heritage of all people. On the other hand, art and architecture literature, music, science and technology in which all sections of the people had played an equal role were not sufficiently emphasized. In addition, the Hindu reforms invariably confined their praise of the Indian past to its ancient period. Even a broad-minded man such as Swami Vivekananda talked of the Indian spirit or India's past achievements in this sense alone. Similarly, many of the Muslim reformers turned to the history of West Asia for their traditions and moments of pride. Thus, the reformers' activities tended to create the notion of two

separate peoples. Moreover, some of the religious reform movements did not confine their activities to positive aspects of reform. They also started crusades against other religions, thus contributing to the growth of communalism in the 20th century.

The communal view of politics was unscientific and irrational but it played upon the fears from which a minority tends to suffer. Under such circumstances it is the duty of the religious majority to convince the minority by its attitude and behaviour that its numbers would not be used to injure the minority. They must not only convince the members of the minority community that their religion and social and cultural traits will be safe, but make them realize that decisions concerning economic and political matters will be taken purely on secular considerations and religion will not be a factor in arriving at them. This is exactly what the early nationalists did. They tried to unite the people and weld them into a nation on the basis of their common interests—national, economic and political. They gave assurances that there would be no interference with the religious and social life of the people. The Indian National Congress even went to the extent of agreeing in 1889 that no proposal would be endorsed which was considered harmful to the Muslims by a majority of the Muslim delegates. In other words, the early nationalists tried to modernize the political outlook of the people by teaching that politics should not be based on religion and community.

Unfortunately, some of the later leaders did not strictly conform to these wise postulates of secular politics. The militant nationalists gave a great fillip to the national movement and made the people surge forward with energy and drive, but some of their actions led to the resurgence of communalism and was a step back in respect of the growth of national unity. Their propaganda and publicity were effective in arousing the people but

they did have a considerable religious flavour. They emphasized the ancient Indian heritage to the exclusion of the medieval Indian culture. They tended to identify the Indian nation with the Hindus and Indian culture with Hindu religion and what they considered to be the Aryan heritage. For example, the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals organized by Tilak, the semi-mystical approach of Aurobindo to India as mother and nationalism as a religion, the oaths the terrorists took before Goddess Kali, purifactory baths in the Ganga for the auspicious inauguration of the anti-partition campaign—these were not likely to appeal to all Indians everywhere. They had a strong religious bias and, an upper caste Hindu bias at that. While ordinary secular-minded Indians might not have liked this religious aura collecting around a purely political movement, some Muslims and followers of other religions, no doubt, found the imagery and the ritual repugnant to their faith and susceptibilities. Similarly, an uncritical praise of the ancient period and religion was not acceptable to the lower caste Indians who had for centuries suffered under the most destructive caste oppression which had developed precisely during the ancient period. Again, if one tried to make a national hero out of Shivaji and Pratap, one automatically implied that Mughal rulers were anti-national 'foreigners'. But, in fact, the latter were as much Indians as the former. Moreover, all of them belonged to the ruling classes. Their mutual struggles had to be viewed as political struggles in their particular historical settings. To view Pratap and Shivaji as 'national' heroes and Akbar and Aurangzeb as 'foreigners' was to project into past history current communal ways of thought. This was both bad history and a blow to national unity.

This does not, of course, mean that the militant nationalists were anti-Muslim or even mainly communal-minded. On the contrary, many of them, especially Tilak, were all for Hindu-

Muslim unity. Most of them were modern and progressive in their thinking. Even the terrorists were in practice inspired by similar terrorists in the European countries, who believed that economic redress and political freedom could be achieved only through a violent revolution. But the fact remains that there was a certain Hindu tinge in the political work and ideas of the militant nationalists. Their ultimate objectives might have been secular but their formal behaviour was not British and pro-British propagandists cleverly took advantage of this fact. This resulted in a large number of educated Muslims remaining aloof from or turning hostile to the national movement, thus falling an easy prey to a separatist outlook. Even so, quite a large number of advanced Muslim intellectuals such as the barrister Abdul Rasul and Hasrat Mohani joined the Swadeshi movement and Mohammed Ali Jinnah became one of the leading younger leaders of the National Congress.

In a poor, backward country which was being actively underdeveloped under colonial domination, employment opportunities were limited especially to the educated classes. There was, therefore, stiff competition for the limited number of available jobs in the country at that time. The far-sighted Indians worked for the economic and political uplift of the country. But the situation was also exploited by vested interests, both Indian and British, to arouse communal, religious, as also caste and regional feelings. There was a clamour for reservation of seats and jobs for all sorts and kinds of sections and groups. Narrow-minded, short-sighted Muslims and Hindus alike began talking about their own nationalisms, as though nationalism was divisible and could be of many sectarian kinds and economic welfare could be promoted other than by a common struggle against imperialism and the vested interests.

A concrete shape and setting to the communal theory was given in 1906 when the All-India Muslim League was set up under the

leadership of the Aga Khan, Nawab Salimullah of Dacca and Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk. The self-interest of one section of educated Muslims and the reactionary vested interests of the Muslim zamindars and upper classes, was responsible for this retrograde step. The League supported the partition of Bengal and demanded special safeguards and separate electorates. The British were waiting for just such an opportunity. They made full use of it and announced that they would protect the 'special interests' of the Muslims. The League loyally undertook to oppose every national and democratic demand of the Congress. In Bengal, the loyalist League leaders were big zamindars who were, moreover, outsiders in Bengal; they were not Bengalis. Consequently, they had little sympathy for the Bengali Muslim tenants.

Almost from the beginning the fundamental falseness of the League claim that the interests of the Muslims were different and divergent from those of the rest of the nation, was obvious to a large section of the educated and modern Muslim young men. They were attracted by radical, nationalist ideas and they refuted the notion that the League represented the views and interests of all Muslims. The Ahrar movement which was both national and militant, was started at about this time by leaders such as Maulana Mohamad Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mazhar-ul-Haq. Similarly, a section of the traditional Muslim scholars, roused by patriotism, began participating in national politics eschewing communal ways of thinking. The most prominent among these was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

During the first few years of the second decade of the present century Turkey had to fight wars against Italy first, and, later, with the Balkan powers. Turkey at that time was the strongest Muslim power. Its empire included most of the places holy to Muslims. Till 1857, the Indian Muslims had recognized the Mughal emperor as Imam, i.e. both political and religious head.

After the deposition of the Mughal emperor and the growing pressure of Russia upon the Ottoman empire the British decided to safeguard Turkey and emerge as the champions of the Muslims. They, therefore, encouraged the growth of a pan-Islamic movement which implied accepting the Sultan of Turkey as the Caliph of all the Muslims. When the safety and welfare of Turkey were threatened by the British during the First World War, Indians reacted sharply. Anti-British and anti-imperialist sentiments grew rapidly among the Muslims. As a direct result of this the radical young Muslims in India joined the nationalist ranks which were also anti-imperialist. For several years, between 1912 and 1924, the loyalist Muslim Leaguers were completely stripped of all influence by nationalist young Muslims.

But there was a negative side to these developments. The agitation on the *khilafat* question deflected the thinking of the educated, militant, nationalist Muslims from a radical secular approach to politics. Instead of taking up the fight against British imperialism on the ground that it undermined the economic and political interests of the people, they took it up because the Caliphate and the holy places in the Ottoman empire were endangered. Moreover, the heroes and myths and cultural traditions they appealed to belonged not to ancient or medieval Indian history but to West Asian history. Thus, even their political appeal was based on religious sentiments. In the long run, this approach too proved detrimental to the growth of nationalism, because it did not promote among the Muslim masses a scientific and secular attitude to political and economic questions.

While no organized Hindu communal movement and organizations opposing the Indian National Congress emerged during the period Hindu communal ideas were widespread. One reason why no separate Hindu communal organization came into being was that the Hindu communal trend found accommodation within the broad nationalist trend unlike the Muslim communal trend which

had to function outside the nationalist stream. Some leaders began talking about Hindu nationalism, about Muslims as 'foreigners', about safeguarding Hindu interests, even about a 'Hindu' share of seats in the legislatures and the services. Thus, Muslim and Hindu communalism inter-acted and provided sustenance to each other.

THE YEARS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The declaration of war by Great Britain against Germany in 1914 automatically drew India into its vortex. The Indians had not been consulted either before the declaration of war or before the Government committed the Indian people and Indian resources to fighting the war primarily for British imperial interests. The contribution of India, although not voluntary, was considerable. More than one million Indians were sent to different theatres of war from France to China. One in ten became a casualty. The total war expenditure ran to more then £127 million. India's national debt increased by 30 per cent and a good part of it was forced on the people.

EARLY NATIONALIST RESPONSE

At the beginning Indian leaders declared their sympathy and support for Britain. It would be wrong to think, however, that a genuine popular feeling in Britain's favour existed. The Moderates and the Extremists alike learnt with satisfaction of German victories. The Congress made no secret of the fact that it demanded political reform as a price for Indian loyalty. Gandhiji actively helped recruitment to qualify for Swaraj through 'the good offices of the statesmen of the Empire'. In 1918 he was to

say "...nothing less than a definite vision of the Home Rule to be realized in the shortest possible time will satisfy the Indian people."

But many were misled by the high sounding war aims proclaimed by the Allies. Lloyd George said, "The Allies are fighting for nothing but freedom." President Wilson's 'fourteen points' seemed to reinforce these noble ideals. It is no wonder, therefore, that most Indians failed to see the real character of the war as a struggle among the imperialist powers for colonies and markets. Early enthusiasm, however, flagged for want of an indication that Indian cooperation would be recognized in reforms. Surendranath Banerjea predicted that the Government's long delay in announcing reforms would undermine the Moderates' influence.

Two factors brought the Moderates and the Extremists together —the death of Pherozeshah Mehta and G. K. Gokhale, and, the return of Tilak from Mandalay. The Bombay Congress (1915) practically threw open membership to the Extremists at the suggestion of Mrs Annie Besant. Her deep reverence for Indian culture, devotion to social and educational projects and commitment to full self-government within the British Commonwealth had already made her a political leader of importance. Inspired by the Irish rebellion, she started the Home Rule League in September 1916. She utilized the resources of the Theosophical Society and the tactics of the Irish nationalists to found, within a few days, branches of the League all over the country. Tilak joined the fray with his own Home Rule League. His simple speeches and hard-hitting articles once again emphasized patriotism, fearlessness and sacrifice. He limited his field of activities to Maharashtra and the Central Province, while Mrs Besant, ably supported by her many followers, organized the movement in the rest of the country. The war meant heavy taxes, soaring prices and increasing miseries for the poorer classes.

They responded to the Home Rule appeal. So did a great number of women.

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT AT HOME AND ABROAD

While the stimulus of war was thus revitalizing the Congress, the revolutionaries decided to exploit the situation with the help of Germany. Repressive measures of the Government had brought disarray in their ranks. But from 1912 they were re-grouping for a second trial of strength. The Indian revolutionaries abroad added a new dimension to our struggle for freedom. They were not just individuals who had fled abroad to escape prison or death. Most of them were sent with a plan to organize centres in Europe, U.S.A., the Middle East and South-East Asia, where the cause of India might be propagated and arms and money collected to further revolution at home. They recruited fresh cadres from Indian students, businessmen and emigrant labour. They gathered the support of progressive or socialist movements wherever they went. With the outbreak of war they could try to establish contact with the Indian army units stationed abroad, prisoners of war and others hostile to British rule. In collaboration with Germany they planned to supply the Indian revolutionary organizations with recruits, funds and arms. They never meant to be tools in German hands.

After Savarkar's arrest and abortive attempt to escape, the London revolution ariesdispersed. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya went to Paris and then to Germany. A committee of the resident Indians was formed in Berlin with German Foreign Office subsidy, which later came to be known as the Indian Independence Committee. Virendranath became its secretary. It sent missions to Baghdad, Istanbul, Persia and Kabul to work among Indian army units and Indian prisoners of war. Raja Mahendra Pratap

was sent to Kabul with Maulana Barkataullah and Maulana Obeidullah Sindhi, where they formed a Provisional Government of India.

Meanwhile, Hardayal arrived in the United States where Taraknath Das and Sohan Singh Bhakna had already been spreading a revolutionary message among the Indian emigrants settled on the west coast and feeling rather embittered about the strict American immigration laws. They organized a party called Ghadr, taking the name of a weekly paper published from 1 November 1913, in commemoration of the uprising of 1857. Its programme included work among troops, assassination of officials, publication of revolutionary, anti-imperialist literature and procurement of arms. San Francisco became its headquarters and branches were set up all along the U.S. coast and the Far East. The idea was to bring about a simultaneous revolt in all the British colonies. "Wanted brave soldiers," the *Ghadr* advertised, "to stir up *Ghadr* in India. Pay—death; Price—martyrdom; Pension—liberty; Field of battle—India."

The Komagatamaru incident helped the activities of the Ghadr Party. This was a ship chartered to carry emigrants to Canada. When it arrived, the passengers were forced to return after two months of privation and uncertainty. When the Komagatamaru at last dropped anchor at Calcutta harbour, the passengers refused to board the train reserved for them by the Government. A riot ensued in which 20 to 40 were killed and many injured. The Toshamaru met with a similar fate. The Punjabis abroad, inflamed by this news, hastened back to India and joined the victims to launch a vigorous armed campaign against British rule. Unable to secure German arms, they contacted the Bengal revolutionaries, among whom new leaders had emerged among the Bengal terrorists such as Jatindra Nath Mukherjee, Rashbehari Bose and Narendra Nath Bhattacharya. Seduction of Indian troops, simultaneous attacks on police lines and treasuries from Peshawar

to Chittagong and an ultimate declaration of war with German arms were the major features of the plan. Unfortunately, however, treachery foiled the rising fixed for 21 February 1915. V. G. Pingle, an important member of the conspiracy, was arrested in the Cavalry Lines at Meerut in possession of bombs. Rebellious regiments were disbanded. Many of the conspirators were executed or transported to the Andamans. Rashbehari Bose escaped to Japan.

Jatin Mukherjee avoided isolated acts of assassination for a more ambitious scheme. A big haul of Mauser pistols, consigned to Rodda and Company, came in handy. A most memorable battle took place on the banks of the Buribalam river at Balasore between five Bengali terrorists waiting to unload German arms and a battalion of armed police in which Jatindra Nath died of wounds he received while fighting heroically from a trench.

The revolutionary movements during the war failed because of a lack of co-ordination among the Indian leaders and a lack of communication between the Indian revolutionaries, the Berlin Committee and the Ghadr Party. The Government, suspicious from the beginning, persuaded the United States authorities to take steps to foil shipment of arms. Any activities in America were made impossible after she joined the Allies in the war against Germany. There was a trial of the Ghadr leaders in San Francisco, which wiped out all chances of any further revolutionary activities based in the United States.

The Lucknow Pact

While circumstances were forcing the Government to see things from a new angle, a way was shown by the Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the Muslim League in 1916. The Lucknow Congress was the first united Congress since 1908.

The Home Rule agitation had infused a fighting spirit into it. An understanding was achieved with the Muslim leaders such as Maulana Azad, Ansari and Ajmal Khan. So long led by feudal elements, the League was outgrowing the limited political outlook of the Aligarh School and taking a more militant attitude. With the suppression of Azad's *Al-Hilal* and Mohammad Ali's *Commrade* and their subsequent internment the nationalists among the Muslim leaders were ready for cooperation with the Congress. The result was the Lucknow Pact.

Tilak played an important role in bringing the Congress and the Muslim League together, because he realized that success could be achieved only through Hindu-Muslim unity. A body of extremists would be less effective than a united nationalist organization. In his eagerness to achieve unity he even accepted the principle of separate electorates and weightage to the Muslim minority. The number of Muslim members in legislatures was specifically laid down province by province. It was to be one-third in the Imperial Legislative Council. No legislature was to proceed with any measure if three-fourths of the members belonging to a religion opposed it. In return, the Congress and the League jointly demanded abolition of the Indian Council, election of four-fifths of the Central and the Provincial Legislative Council members, a promise of non-interference in provincial matters and full control over the Central Government, except defence and foreign policy. The Lucknow Pact was an important step forward in achieving Hindu-Muslim unity. But, as Gandhiji said, it was a pact for power between the educated and rich Hindus and the educated and rich Muslims. It did not involve the Hindu and Muslim masses. It still emphasized the false notion of the separate interests of Hindus and Muslims, and , therefore, the separate political existence of Hindus and Muslims. It was based on the pernicious and wrong

notion that Hindus and Muslims formed separate communities. It was not very conducive to the growth of secularism and it kept the door open for future communalism. A compromise on the fundamental basis of Indian unity, it was bound to lead to more and more concessions till the whole structure gave way.

For the time being, however, the Government was confronted with a definite united demand by two major political parties in the country. It further faced the agitation of the Home Rule League which had attracted the younger generation of leaders. There were also the revolutionary movements at home and abroad to reckon with. Once again the Government responded with a dual policy of reforms and repression. While the Viceroy Chelmsford pressed the Secretary of State for a declaration on reforms, the Home Member talked of setting up a dam to stem the new flood. The Home Rule League was suppressed. Mrs Besant was arrested. The Congress protested to the Viceroy and elected Mrs Besant as the President of the Calcutta Congress (1917). Although the Congress shelved the suggestion for passive resistance put up at Madras, it was completely identified with the Home Rule demand. It demanded full self-government at an early date and the Congress-League scheme as the first stage of reforms.

Official Response : Repression and Promise of Reform

The response of the Government was announced by Montagu, the Secretary of State, in Parliament on 20 August 1917. The measures he suggested came too late and did not go far enough. Of course, Montagu laid down for the first time a goal for Indian reforms, realization of responsible government in India. But it was to be gradually progressive and

effected through increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and careful development of self-governing institutions. This implied successive stages of reforms, with the British Government as the judge of the time and measure of each advance. Their decision again would be based on the quantum and nature of Indian cooperation and British assessment of the Indians' capacity for discharging responsibilities. In practice, effective power was to be wielded by the British in British interests. The reforms were a mere sop thrown to placate the moderate nationalist opinion and to separate them from the militant nationalists.

While making promises of reform the Government prepared to suppress the forces of anti-imperialist struggle. The Criminal Law Amendment Act made conspiracy a criminal offence and enabled Government to institute summary trials by special tribunals. People were interned on mere suspicion for an indefinite period and detenus were cruelly treated. Promise of reforms to placate nationalist demands and mislead the nationalist movement; repression to maintain the firm grip of the rulers over the ruled. Imperialism was to be maintained at all costs by many kinds of measures.

IV THE STRUGGLE FOR SWARAJ

GATHERING STORM : THE IMPACT OF THE WAR YEARS

DURING THE WAR YEARS Indian nationalism had matured. The movement had collected momentum and had in a sense become more forceful. The contribution made by India to the war effort had been appreciated to some extent by the British Government and there was reason to hope that India would be rewarded with some major reforms, if not complete self-government. The mood of the nationalists was one of expectancy, but if their hopes were belied they were prepared to fight back.

There was subdued optimism on the economic front also. During the war foreign imports had almost ceased. But Britains' wartime needs had increased. Some of these needs had to be met by India through increased production. Consequently, Indian trade and industry had prospered to a certain extent. It had given India an idea of what progress could be achieved if given the incentive and the opportunity. It had given the Indian industrialists a taste of high profits and prosperity. An Industrial Commission was set up in 1916 which had recommended that the Government play a more active part in industrial development and to build up an adequate administrative machinery to assist progress forward. Indian capitalists looked forward to major changes in industrial policy.

Alongside these hopes and expectations were fears and doubts. Prices of manufactures had risen sharply but not those of agricultural produce. Enormous profits were made in steel

and cotton piece goods, and a larger scope for employment of Indians was created, but these benefits did not actually reach the masses. The Indian Muritious Board initiated measures to purchase stores in India. The Indian capitalists, however, could not take full advantage of the situation as India had few machine-making industries. Exports suffered by wartime controls and lack of shipping. Production trailed off towards the end of the war. Closures and unemployment followed. Prices of daily necessities had risen very high in the meantime. Between 1914 and 1920 the index of wholesale prices in Calcutta rose by over 100 per cent and prices of food-grains rose by 93 per cent. The situation was not far different in other areas. All these caused acute distress to the common people. The peasantry groaned under heavy rents and taxes. There was general anxiety about the future. The industrialists wanted protection and state aid. Was a victorious Britain likely to concede the demands of Indian economy ?

Immediately the war ended, the economic situation took a turn for the worse. First, prices shot up. Foreign goods once again began to be imported, and foreign capital began to be invested in a large-scale. A growing reduction of economic activity followed. Indian industries faced heavy losses and even closure.

In the political field also there was much disillusionment. During the war years nationalism had received a great fillip in all the countries of Asia and Africa. To win popular support Britain, the United States, France, Italy and Japan had all spoken about the war to defend democracy and pledged themselves to stand by the right of self-determination of all countries and peoples. After the war, however, they did not appear willing to put an end to colonialism.

The peace treaties of 1919 belied the war aims of the Allies and 'the fourteen points' of President Wilson. There was a certain amount of sympathy for the Germans who had tried to help

the revolutionary movement in India. The Treaty of Versailles appeared to proclaim a rule of revenge. The distribution of the colonies of the defeated powers among the victors, the denial of self-determination to Central European peoples, the heavy burden of reparations imposed on Germany and, finally, the treatment of the Turkish, empire, shocked Indians. The Allies decided to dismember the Ottoman Empire in the face of Lloyed George's wartime promise. The landing of the Greeks and the Italians in Turkey with Allied support seemed to herald the destruction of the Ottoman empire and the Caliphate. The Caliph was looked upon by large sections of Muslims as their religious head. They felt that any weakening of the Caliph's position would adversely affect the position of Muslims in other countries which were under imperialist domination. The result was the birth of the Khilafat Movement.

While the Home Rule agitation and the Khilafat Movement were beginning to stir India, revolution broke out in Tsarist Russia in November 1917, and the Bolsheviks established the first socialist state in the world. While the Allies did the opposite of what they had preached, Soviet Russia created a great impression by unilaterally renouncing its imperialist rights in Asia. The Tsarist colonies were granted self-determination. The Asian nationalities in the U.S.S.R. were given equal status. The Revolution underlined the immense strength and vitality of the common people, who successfully withstood the intervention of the imperialist states and the strains of civil war. It put heart into the colonial peoples everywhere. The people in far-off villages heard of it from soldiers returning from the war. Lenin's decrees distributing land among the landless excited the intelligentsia. The Delhi Congress asked not only for India's right to self-determination but for the declaration of the rights of the people of India.

The proclamation of the Irish Republic by the Sinn Fein party

gave a further stimulus. The Irish guerillas of Michael Collins continued a desperate fight against the British. Repressive measures of the latter reminded Indians of the Rowlatt Bills. In Egypt the Nationalist Party of Zaghlul Pasha had grown tremendously during the war. The deportation of Zaghlul in 1919 was followed by a serious insurrection which the British army savagely put down. Independence of Egypt was declared in March 1920. Almost at the same time Mustafa Kemal Pasha of Turkey was declaring war against the Allied occupation and setting up a provisional government. When the Allies allowed Japan to keep Shantung, which had been till then a German concession, there was violent resentment in China. The May Fourth Movement, in which intellectuals and student played an important part, organized a boycott of Japanese goods. The Chinese refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

While these new forces underlined the emergence of new challenges and the inauguration of new mass-based national struggles the official policy proved to be halting. Montagu's declaration of 20 August 1917 was followed by the release of the Home Rule prisoners the removal of the racial bar to enter the commissioned ranks in the army and a personal visit of the Secretary of State to India. Montagu succeeded in mollifying the Moderates but failed to win over the Extremists.

The actual scheme of reforms fell far short of the nationalists' demands. Its main feature was Diarchy. a kind of double government in the provinces. While the charge of the less important departments, like education and sanitation, would be 'transferred' to Ministers chosen from the elected members of the Provincial Legislature, the crucial ones, like finance, police and general adminstration, were "reserved" for the members of the Executive Council, that is, the bureaucracy, responsible only to the Government of India and Parliament. The Governor was to preside over both the wings of the Executive

but not always together. While the Ministers would be responsible to the Legislative Council for their subjects, the Governor might not accept their advice at all. The character of the Central Government remained as it was, except that a second Indian was included in the Governor-General's Executive Council. It remained responsible to Parliament as before. The Centre was to have legislature of two houses with an elected majority in the lower house and an official majority in the upper chamber. The Provincial Legislatures were expanded and elected majorities on a broader franchise was conceded. There was to be devolution of some financial and legislative powers to the Provinces. The residuary power were, however, retained by the Government of India. Separate electorates were extended to the Sikhs in the Punjab.

The most disappointing feature of the Reforms was that under its provisions the legislature had no control to speak of over the Governor-General and his Executive Council. At the same time the Central Government had an all-pervasive control over the provinces. Added to all this, the franchise was so restricted that it could scarcely be called democratic. For example, in 1920 there were only 909,874 voters for the lower house, while for the upper chamber it was 17,364.

The publication of the Report on 8 July 1918 was the signal for the clash between the Moderate and the Extremists. While the former welcomed it, Tilak declared it to be "entirely unacceptable." A special session of the Congress at Bombay in August 1918 called it "disappointing and unsatisfactory," and demanded almost complete Provincial Autonomy, a measure of resposibility for the Central Government and India's fiscal independence. The Moderates, much reduced in numbers by now refused to attend the session and by November 1918 were meeting separately. Next year they set-up a separate organization of their own, the National Liberal Federation of India, with

Surendranath Banerjea as President. But they were no longer a political force in the country.

Gandhiji's initial response to reforms was favourable. But the Government following the policy of concessions and repression made one fatal mistake of presenting the nationalists with a strong dose of repressive legislation at about the same time. The Rowlatt Committee formed to examine the revolutionary activities of the years between 1905 and 1918, suggested certain measures of arbitrary arrest without trial, internment and restriction of movement of persons suspected of anti-Government activities. The judges were empowered to try political cases without jury; and no appeal was possible. Mere possession of an incriminating document was made punishable. The proposals opened the eyes of Gandhiji. He said, "They are a striking demonstration of the Civil Service to retain its grip of our necks. I consider the Bills to be an open challenge to us."

THE EMERGENCE OF GANDHIJI

Gandhiji's emergence as the undisputed leader of the Indian National Congress is an interesting story by itself. His heroic fight for the Indians in South Africa was well-known. His novel method of Satyagraha had yielded good results. The Congress stalwarts had formed a high opinion of his character and organizing ability. Till his arrival in India in 1915, however, he had not played any leading part in the Congress circles and was unknown to the masses. He seemed to young men like Jawaharlal Nehru to be "very distant and different and unpolitical."

But this distance was a boon. People were not disillusioned about him as they were of the Moderates, and, even of the Extremists to some extent. His austere habits and saintly grace,

his use of Indian languages in preference to English, and of religious texts, had an effect on the people who took him to their hearts at once. Gandhiji was firmly rooted in the Indian earth and it was from that fact that he drew this immense strength.

In the course of his struggle against racialism in South-Africa, he had developed his philosophy of action—Satyagraha. Its two major elements were truth and non-violence. He defined it to be soul-force, or love-force, the force which is born of truth and non-violence. The Satyagrahi would refuse to submit to whatever he considered to be wrong. He would remain peaceful under all provocations. He would resist evil but would not hate the evil-doer. He would vindicate truth not by inflicting suffering on the opponent but by accepting suffering himself. He hoped thereby to arouse the conscience of the wrong-doer. To be successful the Satyagrahi must utterly give up fear, hatred and falsehood. He differed from the passive resister, for he gave up violence not from expediency but as a matter of principle. Passive resistance, he said, was a weapon of the weak while Satyagraha was the weapon of the strong.

Swadeshi was his watchword. He defined it to be "that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote." Hence his emphasis on manual labour which he called 'bread-labour', and on the *charkha*.

If Satyagraha was successful in Africa, why not try it in India ? "I have no doubt," he said, "that the British Government is a powerful Government, but I have no doubt also that Satyagraha is a sovereign remedy." He experimented with it in Champaran in Bihar and in Ahmedabad and Kaira in Gujarat.

While other politicians were debating the reforms, Gandhiji rose to the call of the peasants of Champaran in Bihar. Under

the Tinkathia system they were bound by law to grow indigo on 3/20th of their land and sell it to the British planters at prices fixed by them. They were liable to unlawful extraction and oppression by the planters. Gandhiji held a systematic enquiry into their grievances, despite threats of imprisonment. He produced such irrefutable evidence from the long suffering peasants that the Government had to appoint an enquiry committee. He was one of its members. The outcome was more than the abolition of the system. The sleepy villages had been aroused from the inertia of centuries. Young nationalists, like Rajendra Prasad, Mazhar-ul-Huq, Mahadev Desai and J. B. Kripalani, had worked with him in Champaran and were impressed by his idealism as well as his dynamic, fearless, practical and down to earth approach to political action.

There was a similar opportunity offered in the Kaira District of Gujarat. The crops had failed in that district in 1918 but the officers insisted on full collection of land revenue. Gandhiji organized the peasants to offer Satyagraha. They refused to pay revenue and were prepared to suffer all consequences. Even those who could afford to pay declined to do so as a matter of principle, in spite of all threats of coercion and attachment. The Government was ultimately forced to yield ground and arrive at a settlement with the peasants. During this movement Indulal Yagnik was one of the chief lieutenants of Gandhiji. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel a flourishing, strong-minded barrister of Ahmedabad was so impressed by the success of the Kaira satyagraha that he became one of the most eminent and powerful followers of Gandhiji.

The mill-workers of Ahmedabad had also caught his attention in 1918. He led them in a strike against the mill-owners who had refused to pay them higher wages. When the workers seemed to weaken, he rallied them by undertaking a fast. It attracted such wide all-India attention and united the mill-

workers of Ahmedabad so firmly, that afraid of consequences the mill-owners gave in on the fourth day of Gandhiji's fast and agreed to a 35% wage rise.

These first experiments in Satyagraha brought Gandhiji into close touch with the masses, both the peasants in the rural areas and the workers in the urban areas. This was one of the great contributions of Gandhiji to the national movement. In spite of its overall, comprehensive objectives, in spite of the economic insight of the leaders and the way they had laboured to collect information about the hardships and poverty of the masses and marshal them into convincing, unanswerable arguments, the national movement had by and large remained the concern of the urban lower middle class, middle class and the intelligentsia. With the coming of Gandhiji the masses became all at once active participants in the movement. Also, Gandhiji was perhaps the only leader whose personal identification with the rural masses was total and complete. He fashioned his own personal life along ways familiar to the villagers, and spoke a language they could easily understand. In course of time he became the symbol of the poor and the downtrodden, of the large masses that lived in rural India, and, in this sense was a truly representative Indian, whose authenticity could not be questioned or doubted.

Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability and raising the status of women, were three causes very close to Gandhiji's heart. He referred to the so-called untouchables' as Harijans. Once he wrote of the India of his dreams :

> I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony... There can be no room in such an India

> for the curse of untouchability... Women will enjoy the same rights as men.... This is the India of my dreams.

When the Rowlatt Bills were passed, in spite of unanimous Indian opposition, Gandhiji's patience came to an end. He decided to try to oppose it with Satyagraha. This time it was not to be a local campaign with limited objectives. He started a Satyagraha Sabha and devised a pledge to disobey these repressive laws. A general hartal all over the country was called for 6 April 1919, and, this was to be followed by civil disobedience. The hartal was a unique success, but police firing on a Delhi crowd caused a number of casualities, both Hindu and Muslim. When Gandhiji, who was on his way to Delhi was stopped en route and forcibly sent back to Bombay, police charged again upon the milling crowd. Riots followed at several places.

And then occurred the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh on 13 April. The people of the Punjab had been excited over war-loans and Governor O'Dwyer's harsh methods of recruitment. The Muslims were deeply affected by the Khilafat propaganda. The Government unnecessarily panicked and ordered the arrest of the principal leaders, Dr Satyapal and Dr Saifuddin Kitchlu. The result was mob fury at Amritsar, where, following a police firing some officials were killed and two British women seriously injured. When people defiantly assembled next day at Jallianwala Bagh, General Dyer wanted to strike terror into the whole of the Punjab and ordered his troops to open fire without warning on the unarmed crowd in a park from which there was no way out. When Dyer withdrew after all his ammunition was exhausted he left about 1,000 dead and several thousand wounded. The massacre of Amritsar, which even Montagu called 'preventive murder," was followed by a series of humiliating orders. Curfew was imposed for weeks. People were flogged in public and made

to crawl where the two British women had been assaulted. Students had to walk sixteen miles a day for roll calls. Arrested persons were confined in cages. Hostages were taken; property was confiscated or destroyed; and Hindus and Muslims were hand-cuffed in pairs to demonstrate the consequences of unity. Martial law was proclaimed. Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest declaring :

> The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incogruous context of humiliation, and, I, for my part, wish to stand shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings.

The Punjab tragedy brought Gandhiji into the forefront of Indian politics. The Congress boycotted ihe official Committee of Enquiry headed by Lord Hunter, which the Government had appointed. Many of the erstwhile moderate nationalists also now joined forces with Gandhiji.

The temper of the country was reflected in the Amritsar Congress held in 1919. C. R. Das was in favour of rejecting the Reforms but Tilak was for responsive cooperation. Ultimately there was a compromise and the Congress agreed to so work the reforms as to secure an early establishment of full responsible Government. But C. R. Das made his attitude clear. He was "not opposed to obstruction, plain downright obstruction, when that helps to attain our political goal."

All this time Gandhiji was being slowly drawn into the Khilafat Movement from which platform he was soon to declare non-cooperation against the Government. He had been interested in Hindu-Muslim unity since his days in South Africa. The Lucknow Pact, according to him, did not form an adequate

basis for unity. He had established contact with the Ali brothers and felt that their Khilafat demand was just. He protested against their arrest. The Versailles Treaty sharpened the edge of the movement now by dismembering the Turkish empire. The Sultan was deprived of real authority in his remaining dominions. The Muslims of India decided to force Britain to change her Turkish policy. A Khilafat Committee was formed under the leadership of Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hasarat Mohani. Gandhiji was willing to help it. The Khilafat agitation was to him "an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Mohamedans as would not arise in a hundred years." Gandhiji viewed it rather too simply as a unity of hearts. "If I deem the Mohamedan to be my brother," he wrote in *Young India*, "it is my duty to help him in his hour of peril to the best of my ability, if his cause commends itself to me as just."

In November 1919 Gandhiji was elected President of the Khilafat Conference. It asked Muslims not to join public celebrations of the Allied victory and held out threats of boycott and non-cooperation if the British did not do justice by Turkey. Azad, Akram Khan and Fazlul Huq toured Bengal supporting the cause of Khilafat, as well as, Hindu-Muslim unity. The Maulanas of the Deoband School and the Ulemas of Lucknow did the same thing in Northern India. The Amritsar Congress and the Muslim League lent their full support to the movement. Early in 1920 a joint Hindu-Muslim deputation met the Viceroy, who frankly asked it to give up hope. A deputation to England followed. But the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, curtly told it that Turkey would not be treated differently from the defeated Christian powers. The terms of the Treaty of Sevres were known in the middle of May. Turkey retained Constantinople but was severely reduced in size and population. Gandhiji decided to start a Satyagraha movement on the Khilafat issue. This non-cooperation programme was launched on 1 August.

For its success Congress support was essential. But Gandhiji had a tough time persuading it to take the final plunge. Gandhiji's appeal had attracted both the Moderate and the Extremist rank and file, for he had cleverly combined the goal of the former, Swaraj within the empire, with the means of the latter, non-cooperation. Even the revolutionary terrorists wanted to give him a chance. The Gujarat and Bihar Congress Committees had already approved it.

Tilak's death in August 1920 removed the most redoubtable critic from the field. C. R. Das had mental reservations but Gandhiji's call for sacrifice and renunciation appealed to his emotions strongly. The Special Calcutta Congress (4-9 September 1920) hotly debated the pros and cons. When Gandhiji proposed boycott of the Legislative Councils, Das challenged him : "These (reforms) are not gifts of the British Government. Reforms have been wrung out of the hands of the British Government. I want to make the Councils an instrument for the attainment of Swaraj and to use the weapon which is in the hollow of your hands to bring about the full, complete Swaraj." He would enter the Council not to help but to embarrass. It was to be a form of non-cooperation from within. Lajpat Rai was against boycott of schools. Bipin Chandra Pal advised cautious preparation. Motilal Nehru, however, turned the scales in Gandhiji's favour. Another compromise was effected. Boycott of schools and courts was to be 'gradual.' But candidates for the elections were to withdraw and voters were to refuse to vote. The objectives, again, were to include Swaraj. The final decision was to be taken by the Nagpur Congress.

The Congress was thus prevented from campaigning for the first elections under the new reforms. Das regarded it as a dead issue at Nagpur. Gandhiji's case was further strengthened by the exoneration of O'Dwyer who had been Governor of the Punjab

during the Jallianwala Bagh incident and the British refusal to concede the demand for full responsible government. Das realized that he would not be able to carry even the Bengali contingent with him. Mohammad Ali brought about a compromise. Das moved the non-cooperation resolution which declared that the entire scheme, beginning with the renunciation of all voluntary association with Government at one end and refusal to pay taxes at the other, should be put into force at a time to be decided by the Congress. Resignation from the Councils, renunciation of legal practice, nationalization of education, economic boycott, organization of workers for national service, raising of a national fund and Hindu-Muslim unity were suggested as steps in the programme. Malaviya and Jinnah opposed the goal of Swaraj because it was not made clear whether any connection would be maintained with the empire. But Gandhiji's promise of militant action in the coming year carried the day. Only two votes were cast against him.

The Nagpur session revolutionized the structure of the Congress organization by giving it a new constitution. The Congress was transformed into a compact and effective political organization with a Working Committee of fifteen, an All-India Committee of 350 and Provincial Committees with roots going down to districts, towns, talukas and villages. The Working Committee was to be a homogeneous body, active throughout the year. Its decisions were largely to be unanimous. Matters of great importance were to be discussed by the A.I.C.C. which could review the Working Committee decisions and, had even overriding powers. The Provincial Committees were re-organized on a linguistic basis and consisted of one for each region (Pradesh). Each village with five or more Congress members would have a unit; over them would be circle units, taluka units and district units, in ascending order. Delegates to the annual session of the Congress would be elected on the basis

of membership—one for 50,000. This made the Congress a far more representative body. Its membership rose by leaps and bounds as the subscription was only four annas a year. Even this was not compulsory. Acceptance of the goal of the Congress and adherance to its principles were enough to qualify for membership. This brought the party within the reach of India's poor millions. It became more youthful when the age-limit for membership was reduced to eighteen. There was a distinct rise in the number of Muslims and women who joined the Congress. By 1923 rural membership was double the number from urban areas. The fundamental change was not only in the social composition of the party but even more in its outlook and policy. Membership was no longer a passive act but a lively commitment for which sacrifices were demanded. The Congress became an instrument of political socialization. It took up constructive tasks, like Khadi, removal of untouchability, prohibition of liquor, and national education. Use of Hindi and other Indian languages broke the barrier between the educated and the masses. A Tilak Swaraj Fund had been started and within six months more than a crore of rupees had been collected. This made the organization financially secure. Thus a secular party organization based, on mass support, decided to fight the imperialists under Gandhiji's leadership with a novel weapon.

All the Congress candidates having withdrawn from elections, the emphasis fell on boycott of courts by lawyers, of educational institutions, foreign cloth and liquor shops. "Education can wait," said Das, "Swaraj cannot." A large number of students left their schools and colleges. Teachers resigned in large numbers. National colleges like the Jamia Millia Islamia and the Kashi, Bihar and Gujarat Vidyapeeths were set up. Narendra Dev, Rajendra Prasad, Zakir Husain and Subhas Chandra Bose taught in such national colleges. Complete boycott of foreign

cloth was to be achieved by 30 September 1921. This was to be done by picketing and public *bon fires* as in the days of the Swadeshi movement during the first decade of the century. The student community was organized as national volunteers. They did propaganda for the nationalist cause, collected donations, demonstrated against cooperators, ran arbitration courts, and, picketed shops selling foreign goods.

A wave of unprecedented enthusiasm swept the land; the high and the low, men and women, Hindus and Muslims, the conservative, the liberal and the radical all alike were affected. Women gave up *purdah* to join the struggle in large numbers and offered their jewellery for the Tilak Fund or gladly went to prison.

The Khilafat Committee asked the Muslims not to join the army and for this the Ali brothers were arrested. The Congress called upon all Indians not to serve the Government in any way. As the tempo rouse, unemployed labourers, factory workers and the urban poor joined the movement. There were some major strikes not only in industrial centres but also in the tea plantations of Assam.

The rural areas were alive and filled with a new enthusiasm. The call of the Congress for refusal of payment of taxes struck a very sensitive chord in the hearts of the exploited peasants. The peasants of Midnapore refused to pay Union Board taxes and peasant unions were started for the first time in Bengal. The agitation led by Duggirala Gopalakishnaya of Guntur was an eye-opener. In defiance of orders to pay municipal taxes, the whole population of Chirala moved out to establish a new township. A parallel council was set up at Vijayawada. All village officers resigned in Peddanadipadu and 95 per cent of the rate payers refused to pay taxes. In Guntur, Krishna and Godavari district non-payment of taxes was decided upon. Grazing fees were to be refused in Palnad. The Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee

supported these measures and the Ahmedabad Congress authorized the movement, provided all other conditions like Khadi, non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity were fulfilled. Guntur even fulfilled Gandhiji's condition in taking the signatures of the ryots. In Rai-Bareli and Faizabad in U.P. tenants refused to pay illegal cesses. They naturally came into clash with the zamindars and the police. There were attempts to rush law courts and rescue arrested persons. Jawaharlal Nehru who entered national politics about this time was greatly influenced by these events. There were strikes in some of the important collieries. In Bihar the Tana Bhagat Movement of the Adivasis or Chhotanagpur threatened non-payment of Chowkidari tax and rent. In Orissa the tenants of the *Kanika raj* refused to pay *abwabs*. In the Punjab the Akali Movement aimed at removing corruption in the management of Gurdwaras. Gaining control of the holy temples was regarded as the first step to political independence. In Malabar the Mappilas had started a movement against local zamindars and money-lenders, which unfortunately assumed a communal colour. In fact, there was a sudden realization that in the villages of India there was an immense reservoir of strength which, properly handled, might topple down the mighty Raj. The Government was not really worried by a drop in the purchase of British cloth or a fall in the sale of liquor. What really caused them anxiety was the mass awakening in all parts of India.

A more spectacular success attended the movement for boycotting the visit of the Prince of Wales. Bombay observed hartal and arranged a meeting on the beach where Gandhiji made a *bon fire* of foreign cloth. But the mob turned unruly and assaulted the Europeans and Parsees who showed their loyalty to the prince. There was police firing and riots in which 53 persons were killed. The hartal in Calcutta was total but marred by a clash between the police and the Khilafatists.

The Government was hard-pressed and decided to take repressive measures. The Congress and the Khilafat volunteer organizations were declared unlawful. Public assemblies and processions were banned. This was a challenge to the freedoms of speech and association without which no political movement could continue. Das decided to accept the challenge and disobey the order. "I feel the hand-cuffs on my wrists," he said, "and the weight of iron chains on my body... The whole of India is a vast prison... What matters it whether I am taken or left ? What matters it whether I am dead or alive ?" After his wife and son were arrested, thousands began to enlist as volunteers. The prisons of Calcutta overflowed. The jail became "a holy place of pilgrimage." Exasperated the police began to charge and assault the volunteers indiscriminately. 'Mass arrests were ordered. During the next few months nearly 30,000 nationalists were put in prison. Das himself courted arrest and Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai and Gopabandhu Das of Orissa followed him into prison.

By the end of 1921 all important leaders except Gandhiji were behind prison bars. The Working Committee had permitted each province to start civil disobedience on certain conditions. But the outbreak of the Mappila rebellion and the Bombay riots made Gandhiji uneasy. He wanted "to hasten slowly." He decided to shift the emphasis of the movement from the cities, where non-violence had failed, to the village. The Ahmedabad Congress authorized individual or mass civil disobedience and Gandhiji issued his famous ultimatum to the Viceroy on 1 February 1922 : "There is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands including the elementary rights of free speech, free association and a free Press." Gandhiji would try it in one taluka in Gujarat—Bardoli.

Before mass civil disobedience was started in Bardoli, there was a case of mob violence at Chauri Chaura in U.P. In reply to

wanton police firing, some peasants set fire to a police station and caused the death of twentytwo policemen. The Working Committee was hastily summoned to Bardoli. At Gandhiji's insistence it dropped civil disobedience and opted for a constructive programme.

The decision of Bardoli came as a shock to many national leaders. Subhas called it a "national calamity." Jawaharlal Nehru mentions in his autobiography his "amazement and consternation" at the decision. M. N. Roy saw in it a weakening of the leadership rather than of the masses. Others accused Gandhiji of curbing the political initiative of the masses and keeping them under rigid upper class control.

Gandhiji had a hard time in explaining the decision to his followers. He assured Nehru that "if the thing had not been suspended we would have been leading not a non-violent but essentially a violent struggle. The cause will prosper by this retreat.... We have come back to our moorings." On his part, he could show enough examples of mob violence preceding Bardoli. By his successive postponements he had given warning that he would not have Swaraj at the cost of the sacred principle of Satyagraha. He was leading an unarmed struggle against an armed power and he knew who would win if violence were let loose.

THE RECEDING TIDE

Lord Reading, the Viceroy, had all this time been trying to cause a split between the Congress and the Khilafatists through a revision of the Treaty of Sevres in favour of the Caliph. He postponed Gandhiji's arrest till the movement began to disintegrate. The Bardoli resolution in his view "left the organization without any clearly defined and intelligible objectives. From that moment,

disintegration and disorganization set in, enthusiasm evaporated, disillusionment and discouragement prevailed in the ranks of the party." He had Gandhiji arrested on 10 March 1922 and charged with spreading disaffection against the Government.

The trial of Gandhiji became historic because of the explanation offered by Gandhiji for his actions, though he pleaded guilty to the charge itself. In his statement he dealt at length with his own transformation from a loyal supporter and even admirer of the British to an uncompromising critic and opponent of British rule in India and explained :

> I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggression... She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines... Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for the exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures, can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye... In my opinion, administration of the law is thus prostituted, consciously or unconsciously, for the benefit of the exploiter. The great misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many Englishmen and Indian officials honestly believe that they are administering one of the best systems devised in the world, and that India is making steady, though

slow progress. They do not know that a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organized display of force on the one hand, and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence on the other, have emasculated the people and induced in them the habit of simulation.

He concluded by saying that he believed that "non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good." He asked the court to award him "the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime, and, what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen."

Judge Broomfield, who tried the case, acknowledged "the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen you are a great patriot and great leader", but "as a man subject to the law, who has, by his own admission broken the law," sentenced Gandhiji to six years imprisonment, the same sentence as was passed on Lokmanya Tilak in 1908.

With most of the leaders in jail the first non-cooperation ended without the mass civil disobedience even being started. Very soon thereafter the Khilafat question also became unimportant. Mustafa Kemal Pasha had come to power in Turkey and in November 1922 the Sultan was stripped of all political power. Kemal Pasha set about modernizing Turkey and setting it up as a secular state. The Caliphate was abolished.

About the Khilafat agitation and the way Gandhiji and other Congress leaders tried to associate the national movement with it, there can be two opinions. Some feel that it was ill-concieved and retrograde because it did not achieve Hindu-Muslim unity and for a time at least it introduced a religious stream into a political movement. For these reasons it has been argued that the Khilafat movement was a mistake. Others feel that the movement provided an opportunity for the national leadership to convince the Muslims that the nation was equally

concerned with problems affecting the Muslims. The opportunity should have been made use of, as indeed it was.

In retrospect it seems clear that the Khilafat movement did bring the urban Muslims into the national movement and was largely responsible for the widespread enthusiasm and sense of involvement that prevailed among all sections of the people at that time. It is also true that there was nothing wrong in principle a national movement espousing a cause which affected only one section of the community. There was a predominant element of anti-imperialism in both the national and Khilafat movements. If this common denominator could have been used to forge a common desire to fight imperialism as the only way to further the political and economic interests of the country as a whole, there would have been nothing wrong in that. Repressive measures at home and events in Turkey conspired to frustrate the movement in achieving these ultimate objectives, although the nationalist leadership welcomed the emergence of a secular and anti-imperialist State in Turkey.

It would also be a mistake to conclude that this first non-cooperation movement was a total failure. It surely contributed to an awakening of the masses to economic problems and their political cause, namely imperialism. Even the unsophisticated villagers began to feel that Swaraj was the sovereign remedy for their ills. They felt a new sense of freedom in participating in the national struggle. The fear of the Raj was conquered. Ordinary people, men and women, rich and poor, showed willingness and ability to endure hardships and punishment in defiance of Government. There was also an increasing recognition of social evils like untouchability and drinking. The emphasis on Khadi was a realistic assessment of rural needs. Out of the experience of this attempt to defy openly the foreign rulers and the government they had set up was born a new sense of self-confidence and self-esteem which wiped out the humiliation

of retreat. Gandhiji knew that herein lay the strength of his Satyagraha. Its failure did not matter much, for it could only be temporary. As Gandhiji himself explained: "The fight that was commenced in 1920 is a fight to the finish, whether it lasts one month or one year or many months or many years."

THE SWARAJISTS

When the mass civil disobedience movement was dropped there was widespread disappointment which led to a sudden dissipation of enthusiasm in the nationalist struggle. There was even a sense of disillusionment and questions began to be asked about the efficacy of Satyagraha. Was it at all possible to train hundreds of millions of people in the art of non-violence? Even if it was possible, how long would it take? With many leaders in jail the rank and file felt disorganized.

At this stage a new lead was given by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru. When the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee reported that the country was not yet ready to embark on a general mass civil disobedience movement, and the constructive programme found only a limited response, C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru suggested that instead of boycotting the legislatures, non-cooperation should be carried into the Councils. They suggested Council-entry to render the reforms unworkable from within. The suggestion met with a ready response from quite a few Congressmen but the orthodox Gandhians like Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel, were for continued boycott. The two factions come to be called pro-changers and no-changers. The question came to a head at the Gaya Congress in December 1922. As President, C. R. Das made a vigorous plea for Council-entry, but Rajaji's group carried the day. C. R. Das resigned and with Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai

Patel, Malaviya and Jayakar formed a party within the Congress. It was called the Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party. C. R. Das was the President and Motilal Nehru as one of the secretaries.

The new party kept in view the essential principles of non-violence and non-cooperation. It proposed to demand the right of framing a constitution and, on refusal, to resort to a policy of "uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction with a view to make Government through the Assembly and Councils impossible." The imagination and emotionalism of C. R. Das formed a perfect foil to the objectivity and firmness of Motilal. They fought the elections of November 1923 and practically wiped out the liberals though they had had very little time to organize. They won an absolute majority in the Central Province. They were the largest party in the Bengal Council and the second largest in the United Province and Assam, although in other provinces their record was not so good. In the Central Legislative Assembly they captured 42 out of the 101 seats.

But the no-changers were not yet convinced about the correctness of the Swarajist stand. A fierce political controversy raged between the two groups. But both groups remained loyal to Gandhiji and Congress; both were anti-imperialist and truly national in thinking and belief. So in spite of differences on the question of Council-entry they retained mutual respect for each other and the unity of the party itself was not threatened.

In the Central Assembly the Swarajists formed a coalition, called the Nationalist Party, with thirty Moderate and Muslim members. In the Provincial Councils the made similar arrangements. They demanded release of all political prisoners, repeal of repressive laws, provincial autonomy and the immediate summoning of a Round Table Conference to draw up a scheme for full control of the Government by the Councils. If the Government refused to comply, they threatened to bring the administration to a deadlock by refusing to vote supplies.

In the beginning the Moderates and the Hindu and Muslim communalists co-operated with the Swarajists in the Central Legislature in putting forward resolutions recommending release of detenus and political prisoners and repeal of repressive laws. In March 1925, they succeeded in getting Vithalbhai Patel, a prominent nationalist from Gujarat elected as President of the Central Legislative Assembly.

But the Swarajists failed to achieve much and decided to walk-out of the Central Assembly in March 1926. "The cooperation offered," said Motilal, "has been contemptuously rejected and it is time for us to think of other ways to achieve our object."

In Britain a Labour Government which had come to power earlier in 1923 was shortlived and even when in office had no specific plans for India. The return of the Conservatives to power under Baldwin saw Lord Birkenhead at the India Office. Like the rest of the Cabinet, he thought that the 1918 reforms had gone too far and it would be unwise to grant more reforms for some time. He could not conceive how India could ever be fit for Dominion Status. He wanted to adhere rigidly to ten year period proposed in the Act of 1919, for re-examination of the situation.

Meanwhile communalism was beginning to make headway in the country, feeding on political inactivity and frustration. Even the Swarajists were affected by the virus of communalism. Some of the members including Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai and N. C. Kelkar, formed themselves into a group of "responsivists" and offered cooperation to the Government. They claimed that they were thus safeguarding the interests of Hindus. They accused Motilal and Das of being pro-Muslim. It was tragic that at this important juncture C. R. Das passed away suddenly in June 1925.

The Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, started in 1917, once more became active. Communal riots broke out in

Delhi, Lucknow, Allahabad, Jabalpur and Nagpur. Gandhiji who had been released on 5 February 1924 for reasons of health tried to stop the spread of the communal virus by undertaking a twentyone day fast in September of that year to do penance for the inhumanity revealed in communal riots. Though Gandhiji's fast led to unity conferences restoration of harmony could not be achieved. The next two years saw a further spread of communalism in a virulent form. Not less than sixteen riots took place in 1925. The Calcutta riots of 1926 were the worst. Riots were now shifting from larger cities to smaller towns. The Simon Commission listed 112 communal riots between 1922 and 1927 in which approximately 450 lives were lost and 5,000 persons were injured. 1927 was a year of despair. The attempts of Motilal and Azad to get a pledge from all parties to keep out of communal politics did not succeed. In the midst of this growing violence Gandhiji felt helpless and wrote in anguish, "My only hope lies in prayer and answer to prayer."

THE GENESIS OF A NEW PHASE

By 1928, the struggle against British Imperialism entered a new phase. In the five previous years, the British Government had met the anti-imperialist movement with an intensification of political repression. After the decision to drop the Non-Cooperation Movement tensions had developed within the Congress between the Swaraj Party and the 'constructive workers' who wanted no change in the original decision to boycott the Councils. *Sangathan* and *Shuddhi* movements among the Hindus, and *Tanzeem* and *Tabligh* movements among the Muslims, which implied conversion and reconversion had grown among the religious extremists on either side, and they did not help to restore communal harmony. Distrust and suspicion grew.

In different parts of India the working class was split and divided into advanced and backward groups. A relatively younger generation knew of the socialist ideals, which were spreading from the U.S.S.R., which had celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1927, and small groups of dedicated political workers began to diffuse their own interpretations of communism to industrial workers in some towns, principally in Maharashtra and Eastern U.P., and the peasants in the villages, especially in the Punjab. One of their purposes was that the more middle class-oriented Congress (which they considered the most progressive party of the middle class) should link human, social and economic problems of concern to the masses, like industrial working conditions and land distribution, with its own demands for legislative reform. They also wanted a political programme to be accepted which was more radical than that of the Congress.

On the other hand, sectional political groups were also beginning to establish contacts with the working class as well as the agrarian poor. These groups emphasized mainly communal interests and tried to influence the Muslim agrarian poor, as well as urban workers and lower castes among the Hindus. They sought special privileges, political, representation in Legislative Councils and special access to education and to social welfare facilities. They also wanted to be treated as equals in a democratic society. This trend was particularly noticeable among the "untouchables" and other depressed classes and among some sections of agriculturists in East Bengal, such as, the *Namasudras*. Their methods consisted mainly of direct negotiations with the Government which now, as always practised a policy of 'Divide and Rule.' 'Finally' in Madras, the Justice Party claiming to represent the interests of non-Brahmins opposed the Congress which they claimed was dominated by Brahmins.

Gandhiji and his followers sought, indeed, to destroy the institution of untouchability so as to cure communal trends within the Hindu religion. The Communist movement, principally in Bombay, sought to win workers away from communalism so as to eliminate separatism and write the workers into one class. However, in the 1920s, political differences within the anti-imperialist front, the growing communal feelings among many sections and the various enticement to non-Congress political groups which were held out by the Government, resulted in tendencies that threatened to break up the society into divergent sections and groups, and these tendencies weakened the national movement.

It, however, gained a new basis of unity, in November 1927. From London, the British Cabinet announced that it had been decided to appoint two years ahead of time a Royal Commission to review the fitness of India for further reforms and extension of parliamentary democracy. A British politician, Sir John Simon was its Chairman; it, therefore, came to be called popularly as the Simon Commission. None of the seven other members were Indians. The imperialist hope that this offer would contain and check the national movement was belied by the wave of indignation which greeted the announcement. M. A. Ansari, the Congress President at the Madras session of 1927, declared a Congress boycott of the Commission's work of enquiry. It was said, "Indian people are entitled to determine their own Constitution either by a Round Table Conference (of all groups concerned) or by a convention parliament. That claim has been definitely negatived by the appointment of the Commission...we cannot be parties to an enquiry into our fitness for Swaraj or for any measure of responsible government...The third reason (for boycott) is undoubtedly the affront to Indian self-respect involved in the deliberate exclusion of Indians from the Commission."

While the Congress emphasized the first and second reasons, the third one, of affront to the self-respect of the Indian people, appealed most to the liberals, like Tej Bahadur Sapru, who had diligently cultivated the art of parliamentary institution and practice by co-operating in a large measure with the government. Therefore the Congress, the Liberal Federation, and initially, even the Muslim League, decided to boycott the Simon Commission. The Congress slogan "Go Back, Simon," which confronted the Commission wherever they went created a bond of unity in the national struggle; not of social union or of similarity in political programmes but at least of common opposition to imperialist policy. On 3 February 1928 when the Commission landed in Bombay, it was met by huge processions, marching with "Go Back, Simon" banners and black flags. At an evening meeting of fifty thousand people on the Chowpathy sands, different parties condemned the Cabinet decision. Only a majority in the Council of State at New Delhi, which was largely nominated by the British, agreed to co-operate.

Meantime, labour involvement in the national struggle grew though the emphasis was on strengthening the trade union movement and improving the conditions of the working class. In 1927, in Bombay, workers and peasants forced the authorities to suspend the draft Minimum Land Holding Act, which would have permitted increase of the amount of land that prosperous farmers could own, thus, impoverishing the poorer local peasants. In the Bengal-Nagpur Railway Company, wholly owned by a British private business firm with its headquarters at London, the workers at the Kharagpur Locomotive Repair and Maintenance Workshop (who came from different communities and races) led what became a general strike against low wages and arbitrary action by the company authorities. This strike was supported by many national leaders, such as Jawaharlal

Nehru and the rising trade union organizer and leader V. V. Giri. Jawaharlal Nehru who at this time commanded the support of left-wing Indian youth, became a member of the League for Struggle against Fascism and Imperialism which had been set up in Europe and which was sympathetic to the Third International of Workers of the World, set up by U.S.S.R. in Moscow.

Left-wing workers and leaders attracted to socialist ideas were in sympathy with the boycott of the Simon Commission. Labour participation in the agitation strengthened the mass movement in 1928 and 1929. The 'Go Back, Simon' agitation led to the formation of the Students Federation. This association at first inculcated nationalist as well as socialist consciousness, among college students.

At the leadership level the boycott led to a parallel attempt to formulate plans for an Indian constitution. In 1927 at the Madras Congress a resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and supported by the Subhas Bose's group was accepted that the ultimate objective of the Congress was to gain *Purna* Swaraj or complete independence for India. However, the challenge of the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, to the Swaraj Party "to produce a constitution which carried behind it a fair measure of general agreement among the great peoples of India," was also taken up. This implied a new set up approved by the British Government and within the framwork of the empire. The Congress Working Committee, the All-India Liberal Federation, the Muslim League and other organizations met, finally at Lucknow in August 1928 where in the form of an All-Parties Conference, it accepted a Draft Constitution drawn up by a Committee under the Chairmanship of the veteran Swarajist leader Motilal Nehru.

This Report provided for responsible Government, that is, supremacy of a popularly elected legislature over the executive, which was then supreme in British India. It provided for a bicameral, sovereign Parliament, with the same autonomous power as enjoyed by the Dominion Parliaments within the British empire such as Canada or Australia. The Senate would have 200 members elected by the Provincial Councils on the basis of proportional representation. The House of Representatives would have 500 members to be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. There would be no special representation in Parliament for communal groups except for Muslims in Bengal and for non-Muslims in the North-West Frontier. In the Provincial Councils seats would be specially reserved for minorities on the basis of population. Exception would be made in the case of Punjab and Bengal, where Muslims were in a majority. In these two areas no reservation seats of would be provided and representation would be on the basis of adult suffrage alone.

The Nehru Report reflects the conservative views of the older generation of Congress leadership in 1928. While accepting the younger generation's demand for *Purna* Swaraj, they interpreted it to mean Dominion Status within the empire. They were also not prepared to accept democratic and secular principles in their totality. They did not try to resolve the question of communalism in an uncompromising forthright manner. Exceptions were made to the principle of equal representation to all citizens both at the level of the Central Parliament and at the level of the Provincial Councils. In fact, only such special representation proposals would have satisfied those nationalist Muslims who had not joined the Congress and wanted safeguards for the protection of their minority interests, as a security for being ready to trust the vast Hindu Majority.

The rift with the even more extreme Muslim League came in December 1928. The All-Parties Convention met in Calcutta, at the time of the Congress session there, to ratify the Nehru Report. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, a Congress leader till 1921 and now a prominent communalist leader demanded more representation for Muslims in both the Parliament and in the Bengal and Punjab Provincial Councils. He wished to ensure Muslim predominance in the Punjab and Bengal in such a way that the underprivileged Muslims who were in a majority in these provinces could catch up in the utilization of education, employment opportunities and social welfare, by the use of legislative power. He was supported by the more loyalist Muslim politicians, such as the Aga Khan and Sir Muhammad Shafi, who represented the new educated professional class, landed gentry and merchants eager to seize local power from the more advanced Hindu sections of the same classes. They were not prepared to make the same concession to democratic principles that were advised by a range of other Muslim politicians like Dr Ansari of the Congress, the Maharaja of Mahmudabad, a U.P. landlord or Sir Ali Imam, a Bihar Judge. The All-Parties Convention rejected their demands. The Hindu communalists also became adamant. The Sikh communalists also now demanded special representation for themselves as a linguistic and religious minority in the Punjab. Both Jinnah and the Sikh communalists withdrew from the Convention reducing drastically "the fair measure of general agreement" the Nehru Report was intended to have.

These developments strengthened the criticism of the Dominion Status idea, which began to be voiced by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, the two General Secretaries of the Congress, who represented the left-wing youth. They now swung the Congress towards implementing the Madras resolution on *Purna* Swaraj.

In the Calcutta Congress session over which Motilal Nehru presided a clause was included in the resolution supporting the Nehru Report which said that "nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on in the name of the Congress of the propaganda for complete Independence." The Calcutta Congress also resolved that if the British Government did not accept the Nehru Report by the end of 1929, at the next Lahore session the Congress would give a call for a new civil disobedience campaign.

Differences had been resolved through a compromise and party unity cemented. Gandhiji who was re-emerging as supreme leader of the Congress after about six years of retirement in Ahmedabad, and who wanted harmonious settlement of conflicts, was chiefly responsible for this. He arranged that Jawaharlal Nehru should succeed his father as President at the Lahore session.

The Lahore session committed the Congress definitely to an uncompromising demand for *Purna* Swaraj, total, that is, full independence. Dominion Status within Commonwealth was no longer acceptable. The dilly-dallying with reforms—'always too little, always too late'—was over.

On the 31 December 1929, as the clock struck the mid-night hour and ushered in the New Year, a vast multitude of people saw Jawaharlal Nehru unfurl the tri-colour national flag on the banks of the Ravi and heard him proclaim that it was "a crime against man and God to submit any longer" to British rule.

There was a new hope abroad, a new excitement. The air was charged with the determination of the people to fight to be free.

V INTIMATIONS OF FREEDOM

THE NINETEEN-THIRTIES SAW the freedom struggle take many steps forward. The decade began with the second non-cooperation movement; it ended with the beginning of the second World War and the Congress ministries in the Provinces resigning as a protest against India being involved in the War without her consent. But before we trace the course of the national movement during these ten years we must take note of the re-emergence of revolutionary terrorist activities towards the end of the 'twenties and their continued incidence during the first few years of the 1930s. During this period also the labour movement gained a foot-hold in the political thinking in the country. All these influenced political developments during the 1930s.

In 1928 alone there were 203 strikes in India involving 505,000 workers. Membership had considerably increased in the revolutionary Girni Kamgar Unions of the cotton textile industry in Bombay and Southern Maharashtra. Unions pledged to work for revolution had been started by the workers of the South Indian, and, Madras and Southern Maratha Railways. Communist newspapers like *Kirti*, *Mazdur*, *Kisan*, *Spark* and *Kranti* spread in the towns. Youth leagues were established and became popular among lower-middle class students who had little sympathy for the upper-middle class Swarajist leaders of the Congress. However, they did not organize themselves for a struggle for socialism in a disciplined manner. They did not form workers' parties involving the large masses of the urban

working class and train them to agitate for better standard based on socialist ideals, nor did they take steps to link Indian labour with international working class movements.

At the time of the Calcutta Congress and the All-Parties Convention, communists convened the first All-India Conference of Workers' and Peasants' Parties. The conference stressed the need for proletarian class struggle, abolition of land-ownership, "in principle without compensation," a shorter working day and a minimum wage, and, freedom of press, speech and trade union organization. It criticized the 1928 Congress acceptance of Dominion Status as a desirable interim goal.

The British ruling class felt that the initiative in the anti-Simon agitation was passing to the Left. Another Royal Commission, the Whitley Commission on Labour was appointed to visit India and suggest measures for the improvement of labour relations and the betterment of labour welfare. These were the main sources of strength for the Leftist movement and the idea was to mislead the working class into thinking that the Government was more interested in their welfare than the leaders who spoke vaguely of socialism and revolution. But the workers were not taken in. The reformist Whitley Commission was boycotted by many workers' organizations, when it arrived in India in 1929. They remembered that in 1928, the Government had tried to pass through the Central Legislative Assembly a Trade Disputes Bill and an amendment to the Public Safety Act which were not only not to their advantage but which would actually have curtailed their freedom of action. The proposed legislative measures contemplated permitting the executive to curtail strikes and take emergency measures (without legislative control) if the executive considered that the law and order situation had collapsed in the Provinces. They would also make it more difficult for Indian political parties to make contacts for money and support with world organizations which

supported the leftist in India. Members of the Central Legislative Assembly, led by Motilal Nehru, rejected these Bills.

In March 1929, a general strike (jointly called by the Girni Kamgar Union and the railway workers) took place in Bombay. This was in protest against the dismissal of workers who had taken part in the 1928 strikes and the employment of Pathan workers in their place. The striking workers argued that these acts were aimed at undermining trade union solidarity, and had resulted in Hindu-Muslim riots in the mills. The strike spread to Kanpur and Calcutta. Immediately after this, on 20 March 1929, thirtythree prominent labour leaders from all over India were arrested on a charge of conspiracy to revolt against the British Crown. They included Muzaffar Ahmed, Dange, Mirajkar and P. C. Joshi, who all later became well-known Communists; two British Communists, Ben Bradley and Philip Spratt, who had been sent to help Communists in Bombay; and also some non-Communist radicals. A special ordinance was issued by the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, putting in force the two repressive Bills disallowed by the Legislative Assembly. The 'conspirators' were taken to Meerut, far from the big industrial centres of working class solidarity. Here the 'Meerut Conspiracy Case' was tried for several years, till 1933, in fact. Finally most of the prisoners were declared guilty and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. The Communists among them brought as their plea in court a long justification of their ideology and anti-imperialist position. This was suppressed.

We now know that the Government had also thought of arresting Jawaharlal Nehru as a conspirator, but refrained from doing so because of the agitation to which this might lead. Nehru did try to arrange for legal assistance to the Meerut detenus, but the events of 1929-31 pushed the Communist trial out of public attention.

Strikes, however, continued throughout 1929. At the AITUC

Nagpur session, left-wing trade unionists were supported by Congress in the demand for wholesale boycott of the Whitley Commission and the demand for affiliating the AITUC with the League against Imperialism. The N. M. Joshi group which was not in favour of these demands was defeated. Leaving the AITUC, it formed the All-India Trade Union Federation. This organization eschewed revolutionary objectives and even gave up political demands, sticking only to the alleviation of the economic conditions of workers. But generally speaking, even the more radical groups of the working class did not join the national movement organized by the Indian National Congress. As Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his autobiography.

> The advanced sections of workers fought shy of the National Congress. They mistrusted its leaders and considered its ideology bourgeois and reactionary, which indeed it was from the labour point of view.

Thus, because of these contrary trends of dissidence, one conservative and the other radical, and, also, because of Government repression the effect of labour participation in the nationalist upsurge of the early 1930s was weakened.

In the Punjab, U.P. and Bengal there was a revival of terrorist activities among lower-middle class youth who felt frustrated with the moderate and non-violent policies of the Congress. In 1925 there had been the famous Kakori Conspiracy Case in the U.P. in which Bengalis were also involved. Ramprasad Bismil, Roshanlal and Ashfaqulla—three of the accused were sentenced to death and executed. Some of the remaining suspects had avoided arrest and absconded. By 1928 Chandra Shekhar Azad was the only one of the absconders still at large. He now took a leading part in reorganizing the Hindustan Republican Army. Its name was changed to Hindustan Socialist Republican

Association and its objective became an Indian Socialist Republic.

When the Simon Commission arrived on 30 October for its enquiry in Lahore, it was met by the usual "Go Back, Simon" demonstration led by the veteran leader of Punjab, Lala Lajpat Rai. The police tried to beat back the non-violent procession and in the *melee*, Lajpat Rai was injured and he later died. Mr Saunders (the Police Superintendent who had been in control of the lathi-charge) was shot dead by Bhagat Singh, who was the leader of the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha and a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. He managed to escape with his associates. Bhagat Singh, born in 1907, was a nephew of the famous Ajit Singh. In 1928, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha had also contacted the Kirti Kisan Party in the Punjab, and in October Bhagat Singh and his comrades had attended a meeting in Delhi near Ferozeshah Kotla for the formation of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). The Sabha believed that popular mass revolutionary action could liberate the country from colonial slavery and put forward the slogan 'Revolution by the masses for the masses.' It also believed in the need for political explanatory work among the villagers and emphasized that terrorism was only the first, inevitable stage in the revolutionary struggle, its aim being to arouse the masses through terrorist acts of individual heroism and sacrifice.

Acting on these beliefs, the HSRA decided to emerge from hiding, appear before the Indian people and take the full responsibility for their actions. On 8 April 1929 in the Central Legislative Assembly, the Finance Member had just announced the promulgation of the Special Ordinance bringing into force the Trade Dispute Bill and Public Safety Amendment Bill. As a gesture of protest against this autocratic repression, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw a bomb from the visitors'

gallery at the government benches. They also hurled into the Assembly Hall copies of publication entitled the 'Red Pamphlet.' No body was hurt, because the bomb which exploded noisily was quite harmless. These revolutionaries did not want to kill or hurt anyone. But as was explained in a leaflet, they wanted "to make the deaf hear." They then allowed themselves to be arrested so that they could explain their ideology in public using the court as a forum. This was what the Communists were also trying to do at Meerut.

The ideologies of the Communist labour organizers and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association were different in some basic aspects. Yet many similarities in methods and ideology are apparent. In general, both groups presented to the people an open challenge against the brutal repression and divisive tactics of British imperialism. Since the masses were not prepared for Communism and the underprivileged lower-middle class had a tradition of hero-worshiping of terrorists, since the days of the 1905 movement, therefore, Bhagat Singh and the HSRA captured the popular imagination most, and helped the masses to rally to the civil disobedience movement, when it started after the Lahore Congress. Congress itself was not really united.

To Gandhiji and some of his close associates non-violence was an article of faith. They could not under any circumstances countenance violence and terrorism of any kind. They were totally opposed to revolutionary activities. There were others who had accepted Gandhiji, his leadership and his programme of action as the best under the circumstances and the most likely to succeed. They eschewed violence because they realized that the fight with the Government would be unequal. These persons felt that if the revolutionaries in their own way weakened British rule or enlisted the support of the masses for the freedom struggle, they might view terrorist activities as one

more blow aimed at imperialism. There were also some who felt that both kinds of agitation were necessary. Similarly, there were differences inside the Congress as to socialism. Some were honestly and sincerely leftist in their thinking. Others were as clearly opposed to it. Gandhiji and his followers believed in a political and economic programme which claimed to include in it the egalitarian and anti-acquisitive principles of socialism, and, even communism, but excluded such fundamental tenets as State ownership and the superior importance of the community over the individual. In fact, Gandhiji believed in the evolution of the individual into a highly moral human being, so that the society made up of such exemplary citizens would be an ideal one in which the government would be required to govern very little.

For these reasons there were no real links between the revolutionary terrorists and Congress leaders though they had objectives in common. Therefore, the response of the masses was to some extent dissipated and weakened by lack of direction and guidance from the leadership.

Similarly, the revolutionaries, themselves did not make full use of the opportunities offered for a determined fight. Their sacrifice and idealism in giving themselves up and the lack of a sense of organization weakened the impact. A central dynamic mobilizing force appeared to be missing.

The government started a case against Bhagat Singh and his comrades which was called the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Some of the accused protested against being treated as common criminals, and not as political prisoners, who had declared open war against the Crown. To draw public attention to their stand they went on a hunger-strike. Finally, the jail authorities were compelled to feed them forcibly so that they would not die as martyrs. But Jatin Das whose last words were 'I will stick to the last' refused to take food and medicine and died on 13 September 1929.

Bhagat Singh and many other revolutionary terrorists had already, after 1925, imbibed some of the basic ideas of Marxism. Now, many of them in jail and outside submitted to renewed scrutiny the ideas of individual terrorism and heroism and finally abandoned them in favour of the idea of a socialist revolution by the masses. This led to a decline of terrorism in Northern India.

A few other developments that preceded the Lahore *Purna* Swaraj resolution of the Congress must be carefully noted to understand in proper perspective the manner in which the freedom struggle proceeded during the 1930s. The Labour Party had come to power in the British General Elections. Ramsay Macdonald, a socialist and an erstwhile friend of Indian nationalism was the new Prime Minister. But he also tended to defend the basic idea of the British empire, which disappointed his Indian admirers; Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, went to England for consultations and after returning to India issued a statement in October 1929, that following Simon Commission's final report, a Round Table Conference would be held to get the greatest measure of agreement of all parties to the proposals. An All-Party Conference (in late 1929 under Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru's leadership) signed a manifesto welcoming the Irwin Declaration of October, and calling for general amnesty to all political prisoners as evidence of British good faith. Jawaharlal Nehru had at first planned to bring out a more uncompromising counter-Manifesto, along with Subhas Bose. But he was prevailed upon to add his signature to that of his father and of Gandhiji, who had by now become his mentor. Jinnah also agreed with the Delhi Manifesto, but would have liked it to be in unconditional support of the Irwin Declaration. Thus, just before the famous Independence Resolution of the Lahore Congress, the nationalists presented a far from united front. There were differences between the old

and the new, between the moderate leadership, whose authority had begun to wane and the left-wing leaders who influenced image, especially of the youth, between those who would be content for the present with Dominion Status within the empire and others who stood firm and uncompromising for *Purna* Swaraj, between Gandhiji and Motilal on the one hand, and, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and the radical group on the other. In the midst of these differences it was Jawarharlal Nehru who set the tone in the 1930s.

As it happened, the Viceroy's own incapacity to commit the British Government to even the concessions hoped for by the Delhi Manifesto led to a breakdown of the growing friendliness between Irwin and the anti-radicals. He informed Gandhiji, Motilal and Jinnah who met him on 23 December, just before the Lahore Congress that he would be unable to commit Government to any stand at the Round Table Conference. At the last moment, Gandhiji swung over to accepting the left-wing's unconditional position on *Purna* Swaraj. "I have burned my boats," he is reported to have said. On the other hand some felt that by joining the left-wing camp, he had weakened its uncompromising position.

On 30 December, at Lahore, meeting in a town still profoundly stirred by the activities of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, the Congress accepted a resolution which, while endorsing the Delhi Manifesto, stated that in view of Lord Irwin's stand, nothing was to be gained by the Congress participating in a Round Table Conference. It declared that the Nehru Report had also lapsed, and that it was now necessary to start a campaign for complete independence.

The Congress resolution had described this campaign as civil disobedience. This was interpreted by the no-Change group as boycotting all legislative, executive and other government institutions. Gandhiji supported this because of his fear

of the violent revolution advocated by the youth. He stated that "Civil Disobedience alone can save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime, since there is a party of violence in the country which will not listen to speeches, resolutions or conferences, but believes only in direct action." The Swarajist position of carrying the fight into the legislatures had been given up. But a resolution sponsored by Subhas Bose to organize a constructively revolutionary campaign and moving that "Congress should aim at setting up a parallel Government in the country, and to that end, should take in hand the task of organizing the workers, peasants and youths," was defeated.

Yet, while recognizing the contradictions which weakened the internal structure of the freedom movement, we cannot ignore the genuineness of the spirit of unity which prevailed on 1 January 1930. The broad masses of India sympathized with the Congress demand for *Purna* Swaraj. The demand made sense not only to the youth, but also to the older generation and to Moderate Swarajists and no-Changers in the Congress. They sincerely felt at the time that the Government would not trust the Indian people with self-government and, that Independence was the only way in which India could progress. The Muslim League, local groups of collaborationists and the Liberals were the only ones who did not endorse the demand for *Purna* Swaraj, and they were in a minority. To this extent, the feeling of overall unity which the 'Go Back, Simon' movement had created still continued.

The desire of Subhas Bose and others for the formation of small, local groups to oganize the campaign for independence cannot be ignored. But the mass support given to the movement in 1930 all over India, was largely the result of Gandhiji's message of nationality, self-respect and constructive work in the villages.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN

January 1930, was a month of high enthusiasm in India. No date had been set for the opening of the campaign; nor had any programme been drawn up. These had been left to Gandhiji to decide. Gandhiji, in his turn, had given a verbal assurance that the movement would not be suspended or called off as had happened after the Chauri Chaura incident. Nehru has referred to this in his autobiography:

> He (i.e. Gandhiji) did give us the impression that civil disobedience when it came, will not be stopped because of a sporadic act of violence... This assurance went a long way in satisfying many of us.

A Manifesto or Pledge of Independence to be publicly taken all over India by as many people as possible on the 26 January 1930 was, however, adopted. On this date civil disobedience was supposed to commence. It was declared Independence Day.

The Independence Pledge started by declaring in language which appealed to all anti-imperialists, liberals, radical democrats and socialists alike, the reasons for opening the campaign.

> We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives the people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom, but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India

economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must severe the British connection and attain *Purna* Swaraj or complete independence.

But for the very reason that the pledge was to appeal to all sections and groups alike, it left out certain controversial issues. The destruction of the ancient handicrafts and agricultural production by which the village peasantry had subsisted for centuries was mentioned as the cause for the economic ruination of the country; and the continuance in new forms of the drain of wealth to Britain was also referred to. No mention was, however, made of the problems of modern industrialization which had equally suffered from imperialist discrimination. The political ruination was attributed to the "system of education," a very inadequate explanation, indeed. The spiritual ruin was, the pledge suggested, the result of compulsory disarmament, Indians not being permitted to bear arms and the presence of 'an army of occupation' and the consequent spirit of dependence on foreign military strength for internal security. From all this followed the justification for Gandhian non-violent civil disobedience as a weapon in the freedom struggle :

We recognize that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured.

Then followed a sentence pledging obedience to Congress instructions from time to time for establishing *Purna* Swaraj.

Socialist ideas were not reflected in the analysis of 'the fourfold disaster' that had overtaken the country. The method adopted by the Working Committee was an appeal to the alien rulers to undergo a change of heart. But its success depended on the attitude of the ruling class.

An article written at this time by Gandhiji in his paper, *Young India* enumerated 'eleven points' of administrative reform; if Lord Irwin accepted them, Gandhiji believed, the call for civil disobedience could be withdrawn. He was still not sure of his plan of action. Asked by the great Indian poet and nationalist, Rabindranath Tagore, who was far more radical, Gandhiji replied:

> I am thinking furiously, day and night, and I do not see any light coming out of the darkness.

As late as 6 March, he wrote to Irwin asking for immediate removal of the evils enumerated in the 'eleven points' and indicating that otherwise he would have to break British laws in a manner, which would be comprehensible to the peasantry. Jawaharlal Nehru was compelled to remark in his autobiography:

> What was the point of making a list of our political and social reforms when we were talking in terms of Independence. Did Gandhiji mean the same thing when he used this term as we did or did we speak a different language?

—

THE SALT SATYAGRAHA

Finally, Gandhiji took the decision. He would leave his Sabarmati Ashram accompanied by 78 selected followers on 12 March 1930 and walk 200-miles through the Gujarat villages to Dandi on the sea coast. There Gandhiji and his followers

would break the law by manufacturing illegally, but openly, salt from the sea. National consciousness, in general, was electrified when Gandhiji began his Dandi March. As he walked, leaning on his stick, frail and peasant-like figure, villagers flocked to see Gandhiji on his way to break a law which by taxes, increased the price of a daily necessity. Volunteers poured into his ranks to join what became a non-violent column marching on Dandi.

In the large towns all over India, a fever of enthusiasm grew among the lower-middle classes. One expression of this, was the entry of women into the civil disobedience movement. In the *Young India* on 30 April, Gandhiji had appealed to Indian women to take up spinning yarn on the *charkha*, and, to come out of their household seclusion and picket shops selling foreign goods or liquor and Government institutions. Previously only a few women, mostly from the families of national leaders like C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, or, some college students in the large cities had taken part in public political demonstrations. Now far more women joined the movement and courted arrest. In Delhi alone, which in those days was a socially conservative city, 1,600, women were imprisoned for political activity. In Bombay middle class women in large numbers joined the national struggle. Even British observers wrote that if the civil disobedience movement had not accomplished anything else, it had contributed greatly to the mass social emancipation of Indian women. This was one of its positive aspects. It accomplished in weeks, what three-quarters of a century of social reform movements had failed to do for the emancipation of Indian women.

Meanwhile, through the summer heat of April and May 1930, the rank and file volunteers defied the salt laws. Gandhiji was arrested before he could offer Satyagraha and make salt at the government depot at Dharasana. His place was taken as leader of movement by Abbas Tayabji, scion of the great Bombay

family of nationalist Muslims; he too was arrested. The next leader was the fiery poet and nationalist, Sarojini Naidu. Her attempt to raid Dharasana on 21 May, has been vividly described by an American journalist, Webb Miller, who had with great difficulty reached the spot.

Mme Naidu called for prayer before the March started and the entire assemblage knelt. She exhorted them: "India's prestige is in our hands... You will be beaten but you must not resist : you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows. Shrill cheers terminated her speech.

Slowly and in silence the throng commenced the half-mile March to the salt depots... The salt-deposits were surrounded by ditches filled with water and guarded by four hundred native Surat police... Half a dozen British officials commanded them. The police carried *lathis*—five-foot clubs tipped with steel. Inside the (barbed wire) stockade, twentyfive rifle-men were drawn up.

...Police officials ordered the marchers to disperse under a recently imposed regulation which prohibited gathering of more than five people in any one place. A picked column silently ignored the warning and walked forward...scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod *lathis*. Not one of the marchers raised an arm to fend off the blows... I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at each blow.

...In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes... When everyone of the first column had been knocked down, stretcher-bearers rushed up unmolested by the police and carried off the injured...

GREAT MARCH FOR LIBERTY BEGINS.

Mahatma Starts With His Chosen Band Of 78.

RUMOURS OF IMPENDING ARREST BELIED.

Ashram Besieged By Eager Crowds:

SOUL-STIRRING SCENES ON BIDDING FAREWELL.

1,000 WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN HUGE PROCESSION.

Punctually to a minute Mahatma Gandhi started from the Ashram at 6-30 a.m. on the historic march for liberty by non-violent means. After a brief and hurried supplication of his "Ishar" and hearty genial smile to all those assembled at the Ashram, the Mahatma led his "natives of freedom" who marched in brisk quick paces followed by a huge crowd. On the way the party was showered with rose petals and flowers and hailed by true Indian farmers offered the necessary sacraments to the Mahatma and his "martyrs".

After having Ahmedabad the party made their first halt at Aslali at 10 in the morning being greeted all along the route with cries of "Vande Mataram" and "Long Live the Mahatma".

Reports from all over the country show that the Satyagraha Day was celebrated quietly in truly last-minute way with practically no new developments.

Bombay which began the day well with processions and fair salutation at Congress House in the morning had some bitter experiences at the hands of some of the self-styled "guardians of law and Order" who assaulted a crowd of school-boys and women-members who carried severe injuries.

AHMEDABAD, March 12.

Mahatma Gandhi's March to Dandi commenced at 6.30 this morning. As arranged he with 78 selected left the Ashram punctually at 6.30. their destination being the village of Dandi on the sea coast near Jalalpur, where prayer was conducted by Mr. H. B. Kalelkar, Principal of the Vidyapith. At 6½, a large crowd numbering no less than ten thousand had completely covered the Ashram.

A VAST SEA OF KHADDAR CAPS.

Gandhi left the Ashram punctually at 6.30. Then commenced the march. By 6½ the crowd was arranged on both sides of the road that runs through the premises of the Ashram. The Satyagrahi soldiers dressed khaki in Khaddar and carrying their kit on their backs proceeded in a body out of the Ashram and arranged themselves in lines of four between the big rows of crowds. How many lacs and Soldiers of Satyagrahaffair were at the disposal of the great task they were undertaking again could be seen from their determined and smiling faces.

MAHATMA COMES OUT OF ASHRAM.

With his usual genial smile that prevails on his broad face notwithstanding his solemn faith in the justice of the cause he was pursuing and in the success of the great campaign he had undertaken upon Mahatmaji came out of the Ashram just a while after 6½, and was accordingly greeted by the huge

Continued on page 7.

CONGRESS FLAG HOISTED IN JAPAN.

Association With Chinese Revolution Recalled

LONDON, Mar. 12.

Tokio.—Newspapers report that the Indian Nationalists in Japan, including Rash Behari Bose, celebrated the anniversary of Gandhi's campaign by hoisting the Congress and hoisting the Nation-

SAHAR PRABHERAI.

MESSAGE OF SALT.

There were persistent rumours in Bombay yesterday that Sardar Patel had been arrested and sent to Jail. At 5 p.m. yesterday we received a telegram (message) from Ahmedabad, in response to our enquiry for confirmation, saying that the Sardar had not so far been released, that is even the time of despatching it (and he had been given the opinion has been received upto that time of going to press this morning.

nal Flag which they took care to keep flying till victory was achieved.

The idea to visit to be that entrusted by Dr. Ram Pal has no doubt considerations before starting the Nationalist revolution in China.—Reuter.

FIRST STEP TOWARDS SWARAJ

Gandhiji Addresses Aslali Villagers.

"MESSAGE OF SALT."

AHMEDABAD, Mar. 12.

Mahatma Gandhi rested at Aslali after noon, 10 4 in the afternoon, which he addressed a largely attended meeting of men and women who had come from Aslali and the surrounding villages. After the usual prayers Gandhiji was introduced by the "Thermometer," addressing the meeting, thanked the Aslali villagers for their kind hospitality and said that he was obliged to them for arranging things exactly as he had supposed.

THE MESSAGE OF SALT.

Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel and he had arranged their journey just for fun and it was fall of thrilling. He wanted to take village people and give them the message of salt, which he hoped they would proceed in large numbers. The salt tax was the curse of all times and they had the power to oppose it. If the salaried classes kept it, Gandhi, strengthened by their help. The power to remove the taxes alone could bring Swaraj, which meant representative Government. The present Government was not such for their representatives such as Pandit Malviya and Mr. Jinnah had no power to do anything.

"LET THEM ARREST ME."

The Government had arrested Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel for the interview to address a public meet-

LABOUR GOVT. CAN'T PLAY TORY GAME'

"Daily Herald" Quotes Burke On "Great Empire & Little Minds"

"NO REPRESSIVE POLICY IN INDIA".

LONDON, March 11.

A striking feature of the representations of the Indian situation on British matters is the strong silence that had been maintained by prominent Labour leaders as well as Labour organs. The explanation is that they do not want to embarrass the Viceroy who figures in a remarkable degree the predecessor of the Labour cabinet. There is equally the anxiety that the situation should not be affected under any circumstances in regard to the release of Gandhi or a revocation of their arrest of this, with the material war against. The first impression created by the ceaseless arrest of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was that it was taken with the knowledge assent of the Viceroy or his ministers that that is repudiated a definite policy, but does that information the hatred and that the arrest of Sardar was at much of a surprise to the Government of India as to the nationalists in this end.

LABOUR MINIST[illegible]

It has also leaked out that it is very much the desire of the Labour Cabinet that the treatment of the Indian situation should not be subjected to any partisan opposite party. As the

peaceful a time basis of a [illegible] arbitrary to India.

PEOPLE HAVE NO INTEREST IN [illegible]

Concluding, the "Daily Herald" quotes Burke's dictum that [illegible] have an interest in disorder and [illegible] can and not be maintained that civil power is lost if [illegible] is necessary to Indian people and English people did [illegible] if the [illegible] conditions of peace have become intolerable. If only the Labour Government [illegible] policy based on these [illegible] matters namely, [illegible] which the character and leadership of leaders and pay [illegible] to throw peaceful [illegible] [illegible] that their Indian policy would not [illegible] the approval of the [illegible] British public [illegible] Peace Service.

Hilfred Chilton's Warning To Britain.

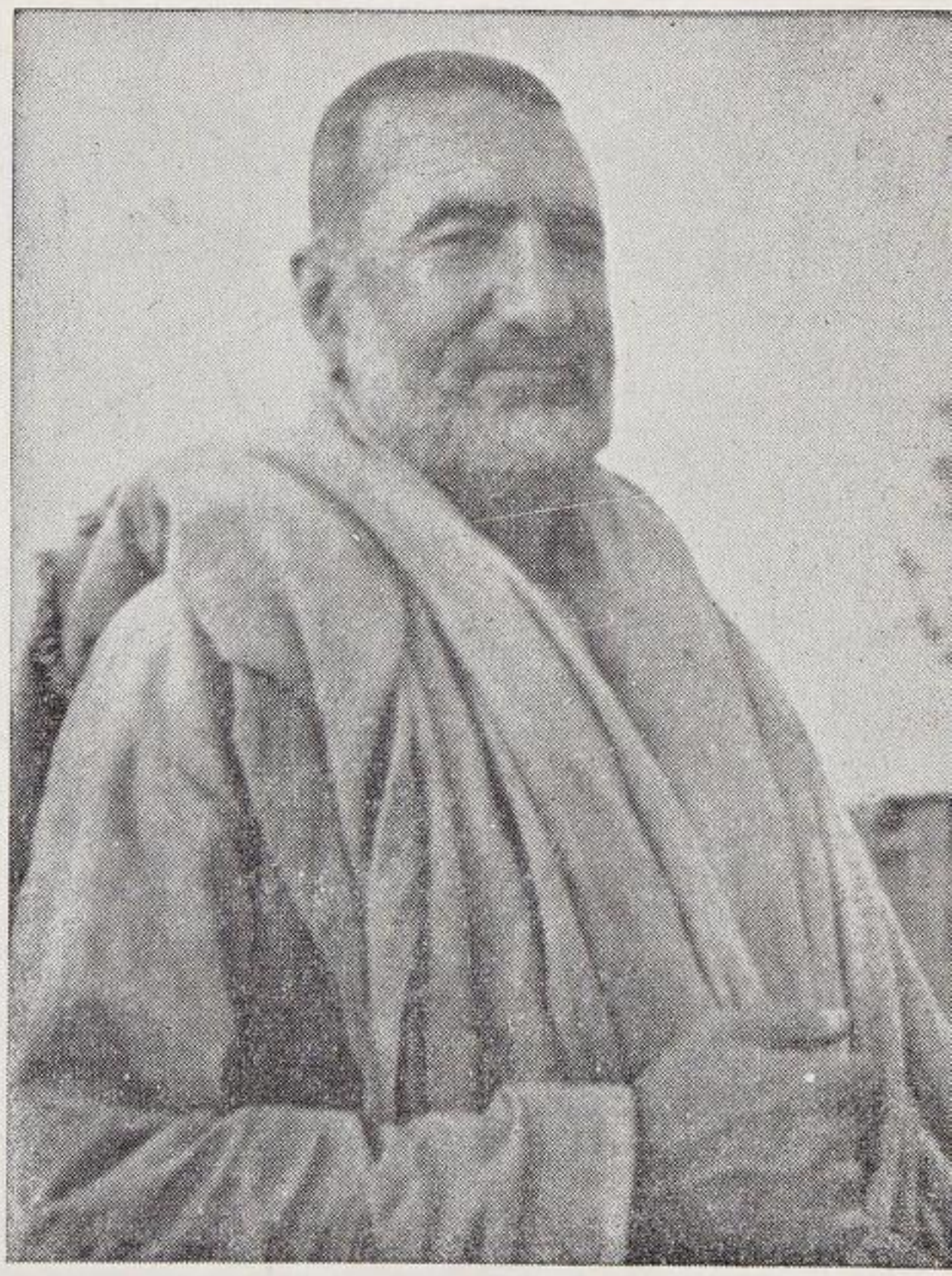
LONDON, March 12.

A grave note of warning [illegible] uttered by a retired Civilian in the columns of the "Times" which runs contrary to the usual [illegible] of retired Civilians like the Duke [illegible] and the Midland Colleges [illegible] contend that what is wanted is [illegible]

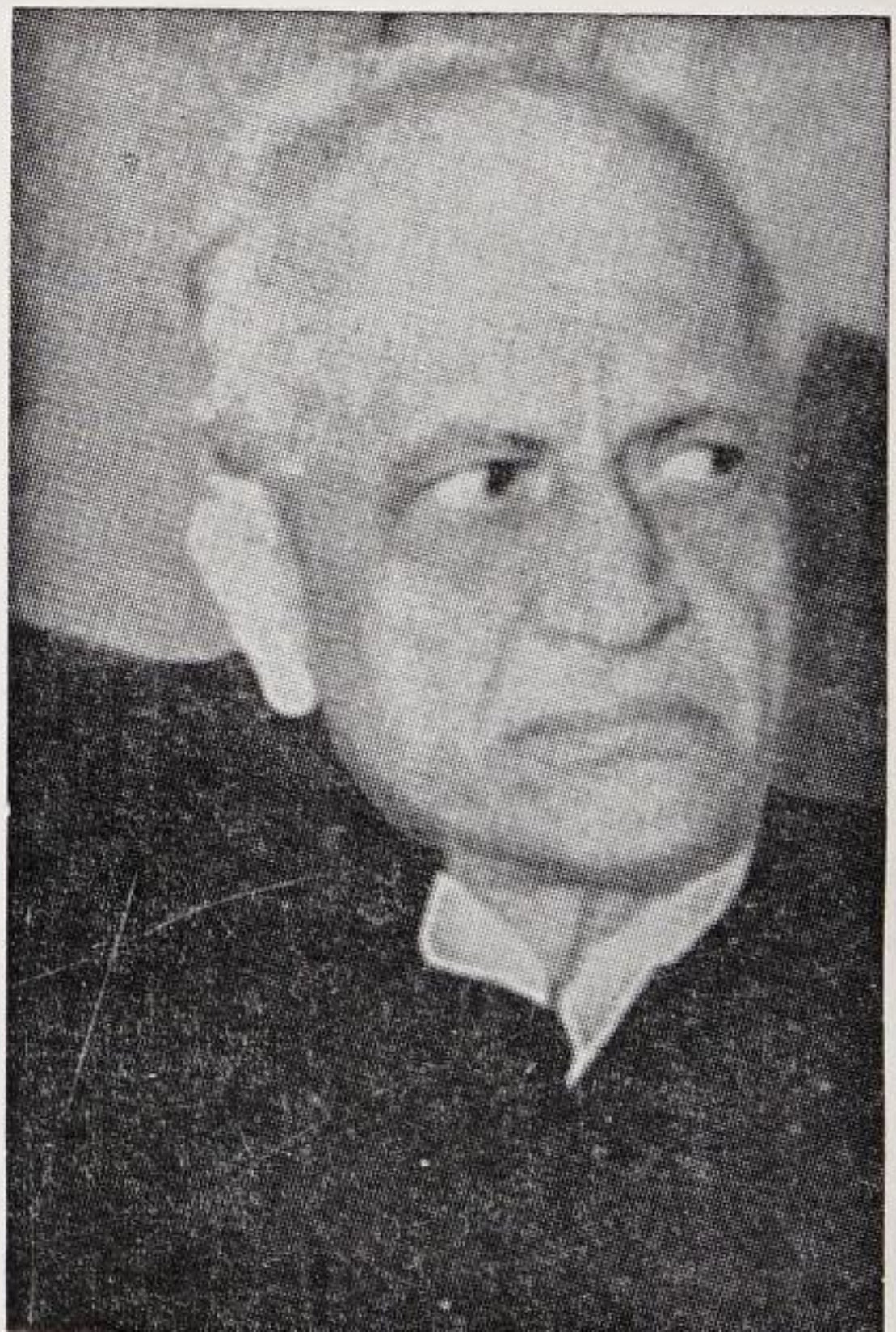
Press Coverage for Dandi March

Gandhiji breaking the Salt law at Dandi

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan



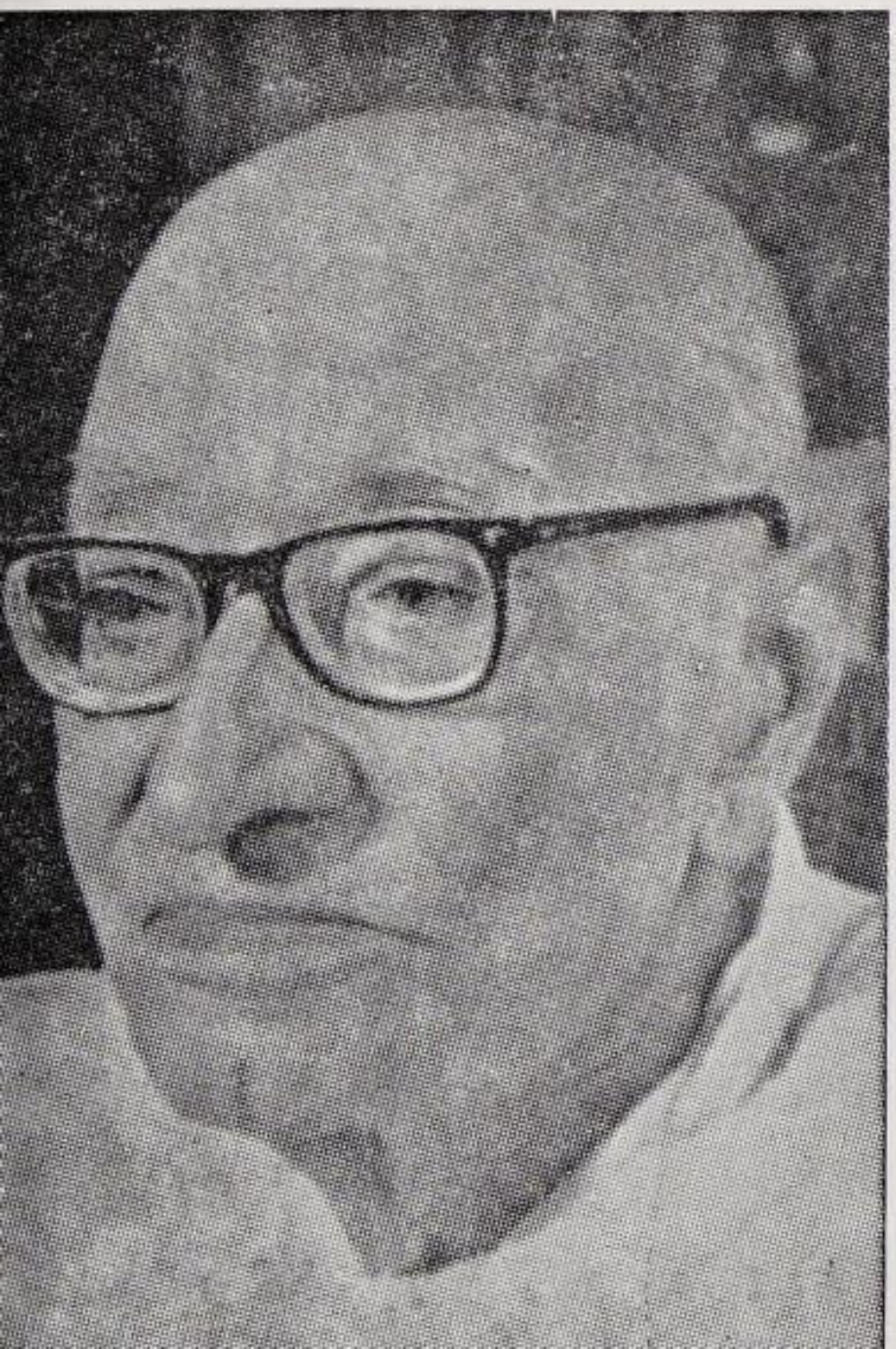
Krishna Menon, General Liste and Jawaharlal Nehru in Spain, 1938



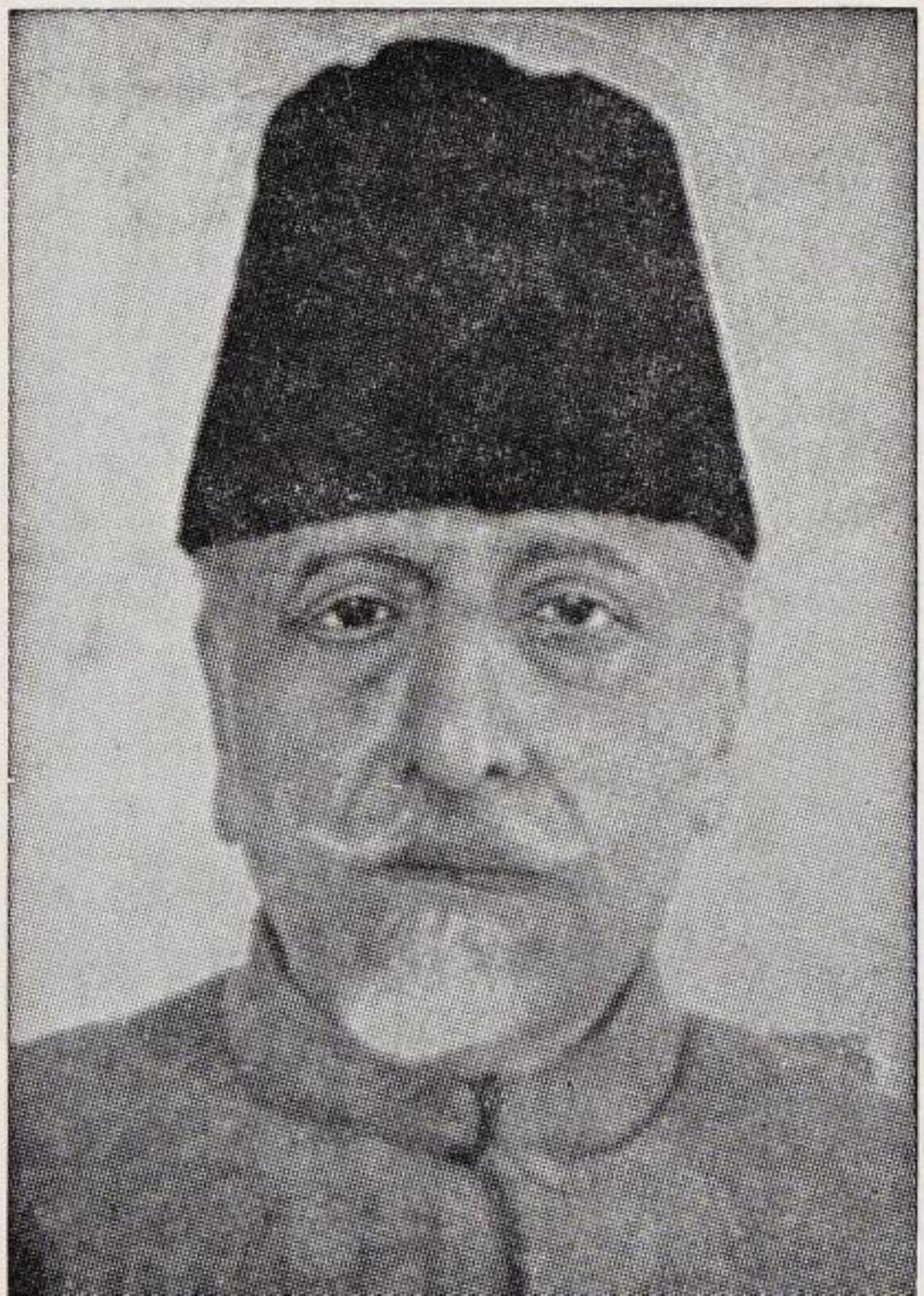
S. A. Dange

Subhash Bose, Nehru, Gandhi and Patel

C. Rajagopalachari



Abul Kalam Azad



A Women's Regiment of the I.N.A.

Jayaprakash Narayan

Ram Manohar Lohia

Then another column formed while their leaders pleaded with them to retain their self-control... They marched...without the encouragement of music or cheering or any possibility that they might escape serious injury or death. The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column... I say eighteen injured being carried off simultaneously, while fortytwo still lay bleeding on the ground awaiting stretcher-bearers.

Then followed a detailed description of Indian policemen advancing into the waiting crowd and beating them down as they sat waiting, after refusing an order to disperse. Miller's own reaction was :

> At times, the spectacle of unresisting men being methodically bashed into bloody pulp sickened me so much that I had to turn away... I felt an indefinable sense of helpless rage and loathing...

Non-violent organization nearly broke down several times. The leaders had to exhort the intensely excited men to remember Gandhiji's instructions. It seemed that the unarmed throng was on the verge of launching a mass assault on the police. The British police superintendent got his riflemen on to a small hillock, ready to fire into the crowd. But the leaders, managed to keep the volunteers in check.

By 11.00 A.M. that forenoon it had become very hot; the temperature had risen to 116°F and the demonstrations subsided. 320 people had been severely wounded, 2 had died, and, there were only few nationalist doctors in attendance. When Miller attempted to send the story to the world Press, it was at first stopped by the authorities and then censored. Much later he published it in a book.

Demonstrations were organized throughout India against Gandhiji's arrest. In Bombay, riots broke out at Bhendi Bazar and at Wadala, the salt pans, but the procession which marched through the European quarters was entirely non-violent. In Madras, police beating was indiscriminate. Boycott of British cloth was highest in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; in the U. P., the peasants and zamindars were called upon to withhold all payment of revenues, and after October, peasants were asked to withhold rent to the zamindars. In the Central Provinces Satyagraha was launched against forest taxes. In Karnataka, a successful no-tax campaign was launched.

The movement spread quickly and reached the farthest areas of the country. In the western hills of the North-West Frontier Province, there had been frequent uprisings against British rule by Pathan tribesmen. The people of Dera Ismail Khan and Peshawar and the river valley of Bannu and Kohat lived in relatively more settled agricultural conditions under local chiefs. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, one of the chiefs from the village Utmanzai near Peshawar had started the first Pathan educational society. For his activities in support of the Hijrat and pro-Afghan movements in 1919, he had been kept in prison and then in exile from the Province for a long time. He returned just before 1929. With his elder brother, Doctor Khan Sahib, who had had the benefit of modern education, he had organized many Pathans in support of the non-violent Gandhian movement. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who was reputed for his strength of character and determination came to be known as 'Frontier Gandhi'. He organized first a nationalist wing of the Pathan *Jirgah* or tribal council. This wing similar to the Congress volunteer units, was known as the Khudai Khidmatgars, the Servants of God. Because of the uniforms they wore they came to be popularly known as Red Shirts. They called for Pathan regional nationalist unity and a struggle against colonialism and the impoverishment of the handicraft

workers. They gained the support of the masses, both the poor peasants and the urban handicraft workers. In 1930 the Khudai Khidmatgars were about 80,000 strong. Abdul Ghaffar Khan found it more difficult to control the violent passions of his followers than did the Gandhian leadership in other parts of the country.

In Peshawar, the civil disobedience campaign was due to start on 20 April, when large numbers of poor peasants had gathered for the Id celebrations. Many frontier tribesmen, due to return home after seasonal work in the plains, were present to take part in the celebrations. When local Congressmen were arrested, the urban crowd rose in protest and endeavoured to free them from the police. The tribesmen joined in. Tempers rose and shots were fired from both sides. A popular uprising ensued. Barricades were raised against British armoured cars, which were sent in to crush the Peshawar uprising. The officials and the urban, upper class gentry took refuge within the military cantonment. Meanwhile, the Akalis, the militant Sikh reformers and nationalists, were fomenting revolt among the Indian soldiers of the army. When two platoons of the Royal Garhwal Rifles, crack hill soldiers, were ordered to fire on the crowd, they responded to the appeal of one of their comrades, Chander Singh Garhwali, and refused to fire and began to fraternise with their Muslim Pathan brethren. This was once again proof of the weakness of the British policy of 'Divide and Rule.' If the exploited people could in advance be educated to remain united, the policy could not succeed.

The Garhwali platoons were surrounded by British troops from the cantonment and later court-martialled. A few of their leaders were executed for mutiny. However, early in May, the *Afridi* and *Mohmand* tribes in the hills revolted and marched on Peshawar to join the town uprising. In the Punjab, there was a show of solidarity for Peshawar, principally by the Akalis,

who sent a detachment to help the local agitators. This detachment was held up by the British army at the river Jhelum. And finally, a British military punitive expedition marched into the North-West Frontier Province and drove the tribesmen back into the hills.

In the East Bengal port of Chittagong, an armed uprising was attempted by the local lower-middle class youths led by a veteran terrorist, Surya Sen. They planned to launch simultaneous attacks on British armouries in East Bengal.

Surya Sen's lieutenants, Ambika Chakraborty, a local Congressman, Loknath Bal, and, Ganesh Ghosh, who later became a prominent Communist, mobilized local college and school students, who included young boys like Ananda Gupta and Tegra (Tiger) Bal, as well as as, courageous young women like Kalpana Dutt and Pritilata Wadedar.

A manifesto issued by Surya Sen in the name of the Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch, called on Indians to rise in war against British rule. He and his followers set out to attack the Europeans in Chittagong at four centres. The police armoury was raided by 50 youths clad in British Indian army uniforms for disguise. This episode came to be called the Chittagong Armoury Raid.

But in their hurry, the raiders had failed to take cartridges for the Lewis guns and the rifles which they had captured. A small and poorly-equipped Government force under the Deputy Inspector-General of Police was able to force them to retreat from the town into the hills beyond Chittagong. On the 22 May fiftyseven of the revolutionaries were surrounded on the Jalalabad range by a British regiment. Still many of them managed to escape to continue guerilla warfare, by the most 64 British troops had been killed. The youngest of the revolutionaries, Tegra Bal was mortally wounded by one of the first shots and his last words to Lokenath were "I am going, fight to the last."

After this revolutionary terrorism spread in Bengal. In August Benoy Bose, a student in the Dacca Mitford Hospital School shot at and killed a senior British police official and then escaped. In December, with two others, Badal and Dinesh, he entered the Writers' Buildings, the Government Headquarters in Dalhousie Square in Calcutta. They shot down the Inspector-General of Prisons in his office and then ran through a corridor shooting at any European officers they saw. Rather than be captured, Badal took cyanide and died, while Benoy and Dinesh shot themselves. Benoy Bose died within a few days, but Dinesh recovered and was then tried and hanged.

Terrorism was kept alive in the north by the veteran, Chandrasekhar Azad. The police captured his aides and his sources of supply were unearthed. In February 1931, betrayed to the police, Chandrasekhar died, fighting to the last at Alfred Park in Allahabad.

Previously, in 1930, the Government had taken supra-legal powers under the Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance, which enabled them to try Bhagat Singh and his comrades without the usual rules of evidence and right of appeal. On 7 October, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were condemned to death and others sentenced to transporation for life. Many of them were confined in the notorious Cellular Prisons in Port Blair in Andamans.

These revolutionary terrorist attacks reflect the patriotic urges of the East Bengal and U.P. lower-middle class youth. These urges could not find expression through the traditional channels of the nationalist movement. The Gandhian philosophy of non-violence did not appeal to their imagination either. Hence they turned to terrorism. But their acts of violence carried within them the seeds of their own doom. Despite the courage of the boys and girls, who participated, they were bound to be unsuccessful in the face of the police and military might of the

Government. There was no real panic on the part of the British, only a grimmer determination to root out and destroy the revolutionary terrorists. One reason was that sympathetic popular uprisings did not follow in the wake of terrorist attacks. The masses were not yet ready to participate in or bring about a violent revolution for they were neither trained in politics nor organized by the revolutionaries.

Another popular uprising took place in Sholapur in Southern Maharashtra. Here the civil disobedience movement was opened in May by a 'War Council' set up by the local Congress Committee. The national flag was hoisted in the town, while the police and other civilian officials loyal to the British Raj retreated to the railway station. The British administration imposed a black out on news from Sholapur. 2,000 British troops had to be sent to put down the uprising. Many of the rebel revolutionaries were hanged or imprisoned.

Alongside these revolutionary activities many peasant movements grew. The no-tax campaign of the 1930s gave rise to these movements but their origins lay deeper in the exploitation of the peasants by landlords. Due to the world capitalist crisis, international market prices of agricultural commodities had fallen. As the peasants' share in profits from sale declined, they became increasingly unable to pay dues to landlords, in the shape of rent, and to the state, in the form of land revenue and other taxes.

The U.P. Congress (of which Jawaharlal Nehru was the president) passed a resolution in March 1930, proposing that the national programme should include reduction of the land tax, a moratorium on all debts with only partial compensation to moneylenders and also reduction of the arbitrary powers of landlords to evict tenants. The Congress Working Committee accepted the first point, which satisfied landlords as well as peasants, but not the others.

The no-tax campaign started in Allahabad district in Awadh where M. N. Roy and his followers joined the Congress in spreading socialist ideas in the villages. In Kishorganj in East Bengal, a region which grew only jute, the drop in world jute prices, a direct result of the world capitalist depression, hit all the peasants who cultivated jute. They stopped paying rent and received support and sympathy from Calcutta workers. Troops had to be sent to Kishorganj to stamp out the peasant movement. In Buldana district in Berar, in December, the cultivators suffered from the merciless fleecing of merchants and moneylenders who bought up the cotton crop which was their predominant produce. The local landlords increased the exploitation of the tenants and agricultural labourers. So the Buldana labourers and cultivators formed a peasant union which called for non-payment of taxes, rent and interest. Organized peasant volunteers resisted British tax officials and marched to the beat of drums from village to village, confiscating moneylenders' and landlords' property and crops and setting their houses on fire. This action united various castes, as well as Hindus and Muslims, and was a genuine uprising of the rural poor. Again troops had to be sent to Buldana to reinforce the police and crush the uprising.

Such peasant revolts were not taken note of by the world public or even the Indian nation in the way that Gandhiji's Dandi March drew attention. But they formed the early nucleus of the All-India Kisan Sabha which greatly mobilized the peasantry to the consciousness that imperialism was the cause of the conditions under which they were being exploited. The militant peasantry fought for their own class, but they also sympathized with the courageous urban revolutionaries who worked in the countryside. Thus we find that different strands entered the mass movements which flowed from the 1930 civil disobedience campaign and not all of them were organized in terms of Gandhian non-violence.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Even before the popular uprisings took a violent turn, Government reaction was far from conciliatory. It was, in fact, quite provocative. In late April, ordinances were passed, demanding securities from the Press and outlawing the Congress organizations; Government was authorized to confiscate the property of the latter. Those who broke laws were arrested *en masse* and the Congress leaders were put in prison by early May. Then commenced a reign of terror on the rank and file of the Congress cadres and their sympathizers.

The Congress appointed a non-official Commission to investigate charges of terror brought by various people against the Government. The Commission's findings were published under the title *The Congress Indictment* and contained many instances of official terrorising in different parts of India. A common story was of brutalities committed by British soldiers on passers-by, men as well as women, in cities after popular outbreaks had occurred there. In Madras, we hear for the first time of a practice later to become common all over India.

> The police made a new departure in prosecuting people as forming an unlawful assembly, by gathering together a number of picketers from various centres, putting them in a lorry, taking them a long distance from the city and leaving them there to find their way back as well as they could without any money.

In Ankola and Siddapur talukas of Karnataka, 330 families consisting of 2,000 people had their lands confiscated; 166 houses were forfeited, and movable property was attached. The penalised people were generally poor and with very limited assets. In Siddapur, 37 women Satyagrahis fasted at the doors of those

who had bought the property that had been confiscated and later auctioned. But the fact that there were still people prepared to buy the property showed that the Gandhian philosophy had not yet been accepted by the entire nation.

In Bengal, firing and lathi charges were the order of the day. Police entered the buildings of the Calcutta University and in the class-room mercilessly beat innocent students. In Gujarat, the peasants began to migrate across the border to the princely state of Baroda. Reporting this strange migration, H. N. Brailsford, an English friend of the Indian people, wrote :

> A few burned the rich crop which they were too late to remove. I visited one of their camps. They have built temporary shelters with matting for walls and palm leaves on sacking for roof... I asked a big group of them why they had left their homes. The women gave the promptest and simplest answer : "Because Gandhiji is in prison." The men were still conscious of an economic grievance; 'farming does not pay and the tax is unjust.' One or two said, 'to win Swaraj'.

Brailsford reported in detail how the Surat police intimidated the people who wanted to return.

In the Midnapur district of West Bengal the Gurkha troops and punitive police unleashed a reign of terror which did not spare even the honour of women. Simple peasants cheerfully bore the wanton distribution of their nuts and all the little possessions they had on earth, but still refused to pay taxes.

THE FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

In mid-1930, the Simon Commission submitted its Report. In November, the British Government convened in London the first Round Table Conference, the British version of

an All-Parties Convention, under Ramsay Macdonald's own chairmanship. This conference was naturally boycotted by the Congress. The other Indian members and representatives of the Indian Princes agreed that an Indian Federation including the Native States should be formed with a parliamentary system of Government. Dominion Status with the Cabinet form of executive based on collective responsibility was acceptable to the conference.

Soon after, members of the Congress Working Committee who were in prison were released. When the Round Table Conference delegates arrived back in India. Tej Bahadur Sapru met Gandhiji and prevailed on him to meet Lord Irwin and negotiate a settlement in the name of the Congress.

Meanwhile, in December 1930, the Muslim League in its Allahabad session had openly opposed the civil disobedience campaign. This enabled Lord Irwin to claim that Gandhiji was not speaking for these interests and, therefore, did not represent the entire Indian nation, which was the Congress position.

GANDHI-IRWIN PACT

From 17 February to 5 March Gandhiji negotiated with the Viceroy in Delhi for a settlement. The Independence Resolution of the Congress and the 26 January pledge were ignored in the negotiations. This caused great pain to Nehru as well as to other leftist leaders. Gandhiji agreed, that Congress would open discussions on the basis of agreements reached at the first Round Table Conference. The civil disobedience campaign would be called off with some assurance by Government that indemnities would be paid to those who had suffered in it. The Working Committee was divided when it met on 5 March 1931, at 2.30 A.M. to discuss the results of the talks. Many people hailed it

as a victory because the Viceroy had to negotiate a settlement. Others were not happy. Gandhiji had personally to explain his views to Jawaharlal Nehru privately. Nehru wrote later :

> The interpretation (of clause 2 of the agreement which opened the possibility of discussions on the form of government) seemed to me to be a forced argument and I was not convinced but I was somewhat soothed by his talk... For a day or two I wobbled not knowing what to do. There was no question of preventing that agreement then...

In fact on 5 March itself the agreement was signed by the two parties and came to be known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

In his talks with the Viceroy, Gandhiji had raised various other points. One was the question of amnesty to those political prisoners who had been "convicted for violence" under the Special Ordinances. Gandhiji had, in fact, pleaded for the withdrawal of these ordinances. He had also wanted reparations to be paid to those whose lands had been confiscated. He had also asked for the end of the government salt monopoly. On all these questions raised by Gandhiji, Irwin was adamant. He agreed to lower the land tax slightly in some areas. But on the major issue of Gandhiji's request for remitting the death sentence on Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru he not only firmly refused, but would not agree even to hold up the matter. They were executed on 23 March. On various questions the repressive measures of the government were in no way relaxed and Gandhiji failed to obtain the concessions he had wanted.

THE KARACHI CONGRESS

The Congress met for the first time after Lahore in Karachi, on 29 March, six days after the execution of Bhagat Singh,

Sukhdev and Rajguru. According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the official historian of the Congress, "at that moment, Bhagat Singh's name was as widely known all over India and was as popular as Gandhiji's." In fact, hostile demonstrations greeted Gandhiji when he arrived for the Karachi Congress and a resolution was proposed for adoption at the session which praised the bravery and self-sacrifice of the terrorists. This was against the non-violent orthodoxy of the body, and Gandhiji accepted it only after a preliminary clause had been added to it. As amended it read: "The Congress, *while dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form*, places on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of..."

This amendment was opposed by the youth volunteers with Subhas Bose's support, but they failed, though by a very narrow majority of votes.

In general, the Karachi session's major political resolution went back to the compromise position of the Madras and Calcutta sessions. It called for *Purna* Swaraj, but also accepted the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which opened the way for re-consideration of objectives. Not unnaturally, the wave of enthusiasm of January 1930 began to recede somewhat. There was little scope for peoples' participation in the prevailing situation. It was up to the leaders to decide the next step.

But in one respect, the Karachi Congress marks another step forward from January 1930. A resolution was adopted on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy which represented the Party's political, economic, and social programme of democracy for the future. This had not previously been formulated in clear terms. The main points were :

(i) Assurance of popular fundamental rights;
(ii) Removal of caste and religious disabilities of all sections of the people;

(iii) Development of regional national languages and establishment of Indian provinces on a linguistic basis;
(iv) Reduction of taxes;
(v) Prohibition of *begar* or forced labour, in vogue in backward regions and many of the Native States;
(vi) Abolition of salt duty; and
(vii) Protection of the special rights of workers, such as healthy working conditions, minimum living wage, unemployment insurance, an 8-hour day and paid holidays.

Congress also began to work on evolving their agrarian programme, though the Karachi Congress found itself unable to demand abolition of the large estates of the semi-feudal landlords. This trend shows, how despite the virtual defeat of the left revolutionary trend in the activities of 1930, the national leadership had to accept some of the tenets at least of a radical democracy, as a result of the mass upsurge of the previous four years. The nationalist leadership now had to move under the banner of these democratic principles for the rest of the period of the freedom struggle. Thus, the Karachi session while it represents the political victory of the Gandhian policy of eliminating conflicts both internal and external, through the logic of persuasion, marks also the introduction of the radical and socialist trend as a predominant element in the Congress programme.

SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE AND THE COMMUNAL QUESTION

Simultaneously with the Congress, the Workers and Peasants Party and the All-India Youth League met in Karachi. The former adopted a programme on labour and the peasant question which went much farther than the Congress Resolution on Funda-

mental Rights and Economic Policy. The latter called for continuance of the fight for *Purna* Swaraj. It also condemned the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the Congress decision to participate in the second Round Table Conference.

On the other hand, the communal problem was increasing in intensity. Already, on 24 and 25 March, a violent communal riot had taken place at Kanpur, resulting in some deaths on both sides. This marked the recrudescence of communal rioting, which was followed by the declaration by Jinnah and the reactionary Muslim groups of their disunity with the Congress political programme.

From April to June 1931, the Congress debated presentation of its views at the second Round Table Conference. Instead of sending a fairly large delegation which the Government was willing to accommodate, only Gandhiji was selected to represent the Congress. Had nationalist Muslims like Dr Ansari accompanied Gandhiji as Congressmen to London, British public opinion might have been convinced that the Congress did represent progressive Muslim opinion. Instead, the Congress hoped that Ansari would be nominated to the Conference in his own right. Also, as Subhas Bose had pointed out, Gandhiji had begun to say that "if the Muslims made a united demand on the question of representation, electorate, etc., in the new Constitution, he would accept the demand." This strengthened the resolve of 'the reactionary Muslims.' What led Gandhiji later to state categorically that he would not accept the demand for separate electorates, was Subhas Bose's firmness and a statement made by nationalist Muslims :

> If for any reason Gandhiji gave up the demand for a common electorate for both Hindus and Muslims and accepted the demand of the reactionaries for a separate electorate for each community, they (i.e., the nationalist Muslims) would

oppose the reactionary Muslims and also Gandhiji because they were convinced that separate electorates were bad not only for the country as a whole but also for the different communities.

In April, Lord Irwin was succeeded by Lord Willingdon as Viceroy. The new Viceroy was basically even less ready to take a liberal position. He disagreed with Gandhiji about the latter's complaint that Provincial Governments were committing breaches of the Gandhi-Irwin agreement regarding non-victimization of political offenders and turned down Gandhiji's request for a board of arbitration to settle differences. His officials believed that this would amount to accepting the parallel authority of Congress. Meanwhile, in the North-West Frontier Province and in the U.P. serious victimization continued of the Khudai Khidmatgars and the no-tax compaigners. Gandhiji tried to force the issue in August by refusing to go to London but Willingdon was adamant, and also upheld a decision not to nominate Dr. Ansari to the Round Table Conference on the ground that other Muslim delegates were opposed to Ansari's independent candidature, since he was a member of the Congress. In reality, the British Government was determined to strengthen the hands of Hindu and Muslim communalists as part of their policy of 'Divide and Rule'. While nationalists like Ansari were refused nomination, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communalists were given a degree of representation that was out of all proportion to their political influence in the country. Gandhiji finally gave way after meeting the Viceroy in Simla along with Vallabhbhai Patel, Prabhashanker Patkani and Jawaharlal Nehru. He got the promise of a Government enquiry into the forcible collection of land revenue in some Surat villages, but "not in regard to other matters hitherto raised by the Congress". Gandhiji did make a reservation about Congress recourse to defensive direct

action in case of failure of the enquiry. But his departure for London on the 15 August 1931 was inevitably construed as a sign of his pliability.

All these indicated in advance the Congress failure at the second Round Table Conference which was held from September to December 1931. Gandhiji arrived after the other delegates, one day before the Conference was due to begin, and received a warm welcome from the British working class. He stayed in the East End of London and toured Lancashire. Although that region had been hard hit by the Congress boycott of British textiles. The workers demonstrated their sympathy with the anti-imperialist struggle of the Indian people. But the British Ministers and many of the communal leaders had already found a way of keeping the nationalists at bay. They insisted on placing the issue of communal concord before that of agreement on constitutional reform to which Gandhiji still gave priority. On this issue, deadlock ensued in the Minorities Committee, which was presided over by the Prime Minister. He asked *all* the members to sign a joint request to him to settle the communal question and pledge themselves to accept his decision. Not all agreed. Nor could they have. The British knew that the different communal leaders would check-mate one another. Gandhiji made the very logical appeal in the committee that "the solution can be the crown of the Swaraj Constitution, not its foundation, if only because our differences have hardened, if they have not arisen, by reason of the foreign domination. I have not a shadow of doubt that the iceberg of communal difference will melt under the warmth of the sun of freedom."

But the Muslim communalists at the Conference, like the Aga Khan stood for the most reactionary interests bent on preserving themselves under the protection of the British imperialism. The Hindu and Sikh communalists were equally willing to play into the hands of imperialism. All of them, in their own separate

ways, played an important role in frustrating Gandhiji's efforts at presenting a united front at the Conference.

Finally in December 1931 Macdonald proposed to carry on according to the terms of the 1930 concord, endorsed Willingdon's policy, and outlined the main points of a proposed Government of India Act, which would provide for a strong Federal Centre and Provincial Autonomy giving a limited measure of self-government to the Provinces. The most important Federal areas of finance, foreign relations (including the decision to make war) and defence would be the prerogative of the Parliament in Westminster and of the Viceroy. In disgust, Gandhiji returned to India.

OFFICIAL REPRESSION RENEWED

The Willingdon Government now decided to take sterner measures of repression against the entire national movement than those taken by Irwin in 1930. When U.P. Congressmen advised peasantry to withhold payment of rent, pending negotiations with the Government, they were arrested wholesale, including their leaders, Nehru and Purushotamdas Tandon, even five days before Gandhiji returned from London. In the N.W.F.P., Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his elder brother Dr Khan Sahib and other nationalist leaders were thrown into prison. In Bengal, the town of Chittagong was left for three days to the mercy of non-official Europeans who, with bands of hooligans, looted nationalists' homes without police interference. Even prisoners in the notorious Hijil prison near Kharagpur were beaten up in 1931 by the jailers who later fired on them, killing two.

THE INDIVIDUAL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

When Gandhiji, after his return, protested to Willingdon, he was met by an adamant attitude. Congress, however, was still "prepared to tender cooperation to the Government", provided the Viceroy lifted the ordinances and permitted the Congress to continue the campaign for *Purna* Swaraj. This was an attitude quite distant from the spirit of the Lahore Congress. Yet it still threatened a renewal of civil disobedience. Government disregarded the threat. On 4 January 1932, a fresh batch of Congress leaders including Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai Patel, the Congress President, were arrested. Now jail beatings on political prisoners and attempts to treat them as common criminals became more common than ever before. Terrorist reprisals against official terror spiralled in 1932. Gandhiji expressed the wish that civil disobedience should not be offered *en masse* but individually, through specific actions. His argument was that non-violent people should have the courage to stand alone. But his real reason was, perhaps, fear of mass action leading to violence under provocation by the Government and in frustration against the lack of success of the movement. When the annual Congress session was scheduled for 24 April at Delhi under the acting Presidentship of Madan Mohan Malaviya, most of the leading members were arrested under the Ordinances. The others held a meeting near the Clock Tower in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, under the officiating Presidentship of Seth Ranchoddas, an Ahmedabad delegate. They too, were arrested, but, however, released on 1 May.

THE COMMUNAL AWARD

A new trend away from mass movements was the revival of Gandhiji's old concern for gaining support from the Harijans,

Scheduled Castes and Tribes. This was his answer to the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' which found expression in the official Communal Award declared early in 1932 by Ramsay Macdonald. The Award provided for separate Hindu, 'Untouchable' and Muslim electorates for the new Federal legislatures, treating Hindus and Harijans as two separate political entities. Gandhiji took this as a challenge. He was supported by many untouchables, such as a M. C. Rajah. They wanted a common electorate with reservation of seats for the Harijans. But some of them led by Dr Ambedkar refused to accept a system which called Harijan Hindus, without abolishing untouchability. Willingdon seized these opportunities to insist that the Communal Award must be accepted. Consequently Gandhiji who was then interned in Yeravda Jail, near Poona, began in September a fast unto death. He opposed the Award but demanded reservation of far more seats for Harijans within the Hindu electorate than was provided for them in the Award itself. Ambedkar accepted Gandhiji's stand. The Poona Pact was accepted by Government as an amendment to the Communal Award.

This increased Congress influence through organizations such as the All-India Untouchability League and the Servants of the Untouchables Society. Congress propaganda among the backward Scheduled Tribes in Central India, South Bihar and the hill areas of Orissa, where Congress sympathizers like the English ex-missionary Verrier Elwin, and Shamrao Hivale were working devotedly, spread ideas of nationalism and democracy among people hitherto relatively untouched by Indian nationalism. Also important in this movement was the campaign for opening all temples to Harijans. 8 January 1933, was observed as 'Temple Entry Day . In many of the pilgrim centres of India, frequented by many castes, creeds and regional language groups the uplift of the lowly came to be linked with nationalism and strengthened its appeal.

Meanwhile, the second civil disobedience campaign or the 'Individual Disobedience' movement as it should properly be called was weaker in its mass impact than the 1930 campaign, but among the peasantry, Congress influence remained dominant. The no-tax and no-rent movement continued in the U.P. and in the N.W.F.P.

1932-33 was perhaps the last year of British rule in India, in which the flames of orthodox terrorism (as distinct from non-violent civil disobedience and civil resistance) leapt high, and were then practically extinguished by repression particularly in Bengal. There were various acts of terrorism and quite a few unpopular officers were assassinated, including one or two Indians. At a Calcutta University Convocation, while Sir Stanley Jackson, the new Governor of Bengal had been presiding he was shot at in public by a brilliant girl student of the Diocesan Women's College, Bina Das, but the bullet hit a note-book in his pocket and his life was saved. Bina Das was sentenced to life imprisonment and not released till Independence.

In June 1932, troops surrounded a village near Chittagong where Surya Sen and four other guerillas were hiding in a house. Capt Cameron their leader was killed in a barrage of shots from the stairs, and in the *melee*, Surya Sen escaped with two girl comrades, Pritilata Wadedar and Kalpana Dutt. In early 1933 Surya Sen was finally seized in the village of Gairala, betrayed by a villager to a large Gurkha force. He was treated with respect by his military captors, but finally hanged at Dacca. Even today, his memory is revered by the leaders and people of Bangla Desh as a national hero. The breakdown of this movement was due to the isolation of the terrorists, consisting principally of urban school and college students, from their own urban roots and to their failure to comprehend the needs of the peasantry for a radical agrarian programme, such as had been started in the U.P. and other areas.

Independence Day, 1933 was, celebrated with unprecedented enthusiasm. At Badangunj in Hooghly District in Bengal, a Congress procession was dispersed by police firing. In February, Kasturba Gandhi was arrested while leading another Congress procession at Borsad in Gujarat and sentenced to six months imprisonment. In March 1933 the Congress session was to be held at Calcutta, under Madan Mohan Malaviya (who was also in the Hindu Mahasabha) as President. But he and a thousand delegates were arrested before they could attend. While the police tried to break up the meeting, delegates in the centre of the crowd held the session under the officiating Presidentship of J. M. Sen Gupta and reaffirmed the goal of *Purna* Swaraj, civil disobedience as its method and boycott of foreign cloth and British goods.

Nearly 1,20,000 persons including several thousand women and quite a number of children were arrested and imprisoned during this period. This showed that the popular will to continue civil disobedience was unabated. But Gandhiji merely concentrated on the Harijan problem. In May 1933, he announced a 21-day fast for purification of the minds of himself and his associates, and for concentrating on the cause of the Harijans. The Government promptly released him. He then issued a statement recommending that the Congress should suspend civil disobedience temporarily. One year later in April 1934 the movement was finally abandoned.

Meanwhile, the British Government called the third Round Table Conference in London in November 1932. The Congress was not represented as it had decided not to accept the invitation to attend, arguing that in view of the stand taken by the government no useful purpose would be served. The discussions at the Conference, however, led to the decision of the British government to pass the India Act of 1935, introducing some further reforms. The new Act proposed a federal government

at the centre and provincial governments with a larger measure of autonomy. For the first time the princely states were brought directly into the picture because the Federal Union was to comprise of the Provinces of British India and the princely states. This appeared to concede the principle that India was one country and the Indians one nation. But the real intention of the British was to use the princes to counter-balance the anti-imperialist doctrines and programmes of the nationalist leaders. Therefore, the States were given disproportionate weightage in the bicameral Federal Legislature at the Centre. Not only that. The States' representatives were not to be elected by popular vote but appointed by the rulers. Even in rest of the country the franchise was woefully restricted. Not more than 14 per cent of the population in British India had the franchise. Even this safely constituted legislature was not to have full powers. It had no control over defence and foreign relations; over the other subjects coming under its purview the Governor-General retained special control. The Governor-General and the Governors would continue to be appointed by the British Government and would be responsible directly to it.

In the provinces the measure of autonomy given was nullified by the special powers invested in the Governors. They could not only veto legislative action proposed by the elected representatives, but they had the power to enact laws and promulgate ordinances on their own. The Governor also retained full control over the civil service and the police.

The India Act of 1935 satisfied very few. The Congress found it "totally disappointing." Others found it inadequate to varying degree. The British Government had not really parted with the poiltical and economic power they wielded over the people of India. Only the structure of government was slightly changed. Popularly elected ministers were injected into the British administration of India, but foreign rule was to continue.

The provincial part of the Act was to be put into operation immediately; the federal part was to follow later. Though totally opposed to the provisions of the Act, the Congress decided to contest the elections, more to prove to the British Government what a strong following the party had in the country, than to co-operate in working the Act. This objective was fully achieved. The Congress swept the polls in most of the Provinces. There could be no possible doubt that the vast majority of the Indian people supported it. Many argued that having won the elections there was no point in refusing to accept office. Nehru and other left-wing elements were opposed to office acceptance. They said that it would hamper the struggle for freedom. But the majority was for office acceptance. Congress ministries took office in seven out of the eleven provinces in July 1937. Some time later the Congress formed coalition ministries in two more provinces. Only in Bengal and the Punjab were there non-Congress ministries.

Because of the limited character of the power of the provincial governments, the social base of the Congress itself—its ranks included workers and peasants as also capitalists and landlords—and the conservative character of the dominant sections of Congress leadership, the Congress ministries did not undertake to change the basic character of the administration; they did not introduce any radical changes. But, within the narrow limits permitted, they did try to improve the lot of the people to some extent. They introduced a new approach to governance and set up commendable standards of honesty and service. Attempts were made to pay greater attention to and improve primary, technical and higher education and the public health services. New tenancy and debt relief laws were passed to help the peasants, though such legislation was often a compromise since it was passed with the consent of the landlords and zamindars. Trade unions felt more free to negotiate for better work-

ing conditions and higher wages, though in some Provinces, they were compelled to wage a bitter struggle. The control on civil liberties was relaxed and the freedom of the Press enhanced, though the popular fear of and aversion to the police and administrative authority continued.

But the most important benefit was psychological. The people felt different. There was a taste of victory in seeing the familiar jailbirds in seats of office. There was a spirit of optimism and self-confidence in the air. Here at last, the people thought, were the first intimations of freedom.

VI THE ACHIEVEMENT OF FREEDOM

THE FIVE YEARS preceding the Second World War were permeated in India with a good deal of fresh thinking. Though fully committed to nationalist, anti-imperialist ideals and the ultimate objective of freedom, not all accepted the programme and methodology of the Congress. Nor was there a clear polarization of thinking. Not only did the non-Congress leaders and groups espouse different ideologies and different lines of action, but even inside the Congress two parallel streams of political thinking had developed and gained strength.

The first outcome of this fresh thinking was necessarily negative in one sense. It was realized that terrorism had spent itself as a revolutionary force. It had not succeeded in arousing the people to a national uprising for the overthrow of the British. With the elimination of most of the terrorists through execution or imprisonment, or their absorption in the Communist and other movements, revolutionary terrorism subsided.

On the positive side there were three clearly discernable trends. First, there was the spread of socialist ideas inside and outside the Congress. Second, there was the development of the trade union movement independent of the national freedom movement, though sometimes in alliance with it. Lastly, there was the growth of the peasant movement.

1929 witnessed a great economic slump or depression in the United States. This slump inevitably spread to the other capitalist countries. Production fell steeply and foreign trade declined to an alarming extent. Consequently there was acute

economic distress and large scale unemployment. In contrast to this Soviet Russia presented a rosy picture. In Russia there was no depression, no unemployment. At the end of the two Five Year Plans production had gone up by four times. The difference was obvious and drew attention to the Communist model, socialism and the benefits of economic planning.

These developments in the outside world attracted wide attention in India also. Consequently socialist ideas activated a good deal of fresh thinking among both the leaders and the people. Especially the young, the workers and the peasants were attracted to the new ideology.

Inside the Congress, this Leftist trend resulted in the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the Congress for two successive sessions in 1936. Nehru was followed by Subhas Chandra Bose, also well-known for his radical new thinking. He was elected President of the Congress in 1938, and, again, in 1939, in spite of the fact that Gandhiji himself and many of his followers were opposed to him in 1939. At the Lucknow Congress in 1936 Nehru had pleaded openly for the acceptance of socialism as the Congress goal. He wanted the Party to come closer to the peasantry as well as the urban working class. He also pointed out that this was the best way of weaning away the masses from communalism. In his presidential address he said :

> I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism, and, when I use this word, I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense... That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian states system. That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense and

the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative service. It means ultimately a change in our instincts and habits and desires. In short, it means a new civilization, radically different from the present capitalist order.

The socialist trend was equally obvious in the leadership outside the Congress. It led to the growth of the Communist Party and the setting up of a Congress Socialist Party. In the early days the Communist Party worked under the leadership of P. C. Joshi. The Congress Socialist Party was set up in 1934 by Acharya Narendra Dev and Jai Prakash Narayan. It had an organization, a journal and clearly defined *Purna* Swarajist goals. It was committed to impelling the Congress to adopt 'socialist principles'. In Kerala, Andhra and Tamil Nadu, the Congress socialists swung closer to Marxism than their counterparts in North India.

The trade union movement, too, had been crippled by repression. The official ban on the Communist Party was followed by the Government ban in late 1934 on the Red Flag Trade Union Federation. Thus, Communists who were released from prison after the end of the Meerut Trials, had no alternative but to work through renewed membership of the All-India Trade Union Congress. In the Congress and Royist dominated AITUC, they were in a minority. The Indian National Trade Union Federation, led by Joshi, Chaman Lal and Mrinal Kanti Bose had meanwhile merged itself with the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, led by V. V. Giri. Giri or Mrinal Kanti Bose were closer to the nationalism then prevalent in the Congress organization. A composite organization was now formed, called the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) which was also supported by those left-wingers in the nationalist ranks, who could not accept the theories of class struggle of either the Communists or of M. N. Roy and his followers.

Prior to the ban of the Red Flag Trade Union Federation the three federations had participated, in a limited way, in organizing from Bombay in the summer of 1934, a strike among the Indian textile workers against a very large cut in their wages. Nearly 1,20,000 workers joined the strike. Police repression, the lukewarm attitude of the right-wing trade union leaders and the use of blacklegs (from unemployed labour, of whom there were 90,000 in Bombay alone) had led to the collapse of the strike in June.

A third trend developing in this period, was the spread of Gandhism, Congress socialism and communism into the infant kisan or peasant movement. The workers and peasant parties of the 1920s and the spontaneous peasant protest movements at the time of the 1929-31. Depression had been repressed by Willingdon. Peasant leaders in some districts now began to re-emerge and start their activities again.

In Bihar, Sahajananda Saraswati organized a powerful local Kisan Sabha which espoused the left-agrarian programme, earlier popularized in the U. P. Another important peasant leader who later gained influence in the backward districts of Bihar was Karyanand Sharma. In the N.W.F.P. the Khudai Khidmatgars, and, in Southern Maharashtra, Royists revived peasant demands. In the large native State of Hyderabad, the exploitation of the poor peasantry of the districts neighbouring southern Maharashtra was resisted by Swami Ramanand Tirth. He had started life in a Gandhian school in a Maharashtra district, moved into the reformist wing of the Bombay city trade union movement, and then opened a Gandhian village welfare organization in Aurangabad district. Ramanand Tirth's efforts created, in later years, a mass peasant base for the Hyderabad State Peoples' Congress which led the struggle for the integration of Hyderabad with the Indian Union after 1947. In South India, caste organizations of the Vanniyars, numerically predominant

in North Tamil Nadu, and the Thevars and Nadars, numerically predominant in South Tamil Nadu, as well as the Iravas in Kerala, demanded a greater share in municipal and democratic self-government. In the Manbhum and Purulia districts of south-west Bengal and the Ranchi and Singhbhum districts of Bihar, Gandhian workers had started work to spread Gandhiji's ideals of nationalism and non-violence among the backward peasantry. These ideas sometimes reached the underprivileged tribal people. In Chotta Nagpur, the Tana Bhagat tribal protest movement later made a cult of Gandhi Maharaj. In Nagaland (contiguous to Assam), a violent uprising against British rule by some Nagas was led by one of their priests who declared a young girl, Guidalo, who was supposed to possess divine powers, to be their Rani or Queen. Rani Guidalo claimed to support the nationalist movement. In the late 1930s, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani organized in the Sylhet district of southern Assam a powerful peasant movement, which spread into the neighbouring district of Mymensingh in east Bengal.

These movements were neither unified, nor all under Congress control. Many of the Kisan Sabhas were led by Congress socialists. Occasionally some of the peasant movements, for example, Tarakeswar Satyagraha of 1937 in Bengal, and the Vayalar Satyagraha in Travancore State, were inspired and led by local Communist organizers. Where the Congress constructive workers were in charge, the peasant awakening had an overall reformist and national complexion. But in other areas the peasantry were concerned with local class problems and only in a distant, incidental way with the national movement itself. In a few of these movements, religious leadership was strikingly present. Peasantry in backward areas are sometimes emotionally-stirred by appeals to primitive morality. The exponents of this morality are their local religious or caste or tribal preachers and teachers. Such appeals to religion as an indirect protest

against exploitation are quite common in the history of the liberation struggles among peasants of many countries.

At the same time, many of the political workers involved in the education and organization of the rural peasantry were powerfully stirred by the Marxist ideology which Communists and Congress socialists put forward. Joint front political demonstrations provided a common meeting ground. Similarly, contacts were established whenever large numbers of political prisoners were detained together, as for example, in the detention camps at Hijli and Buxar, or the prisons of Mandalay and Andamans. Many Gandhians and terrorists found time to read during their imprisonment the books and pamphlets which turned them from non-violence or the cult of the bomb and group heroism to the Marxist concepts of class struggle. On May Day, 1935, thirtyone detenues in the Andamans jail, including all of Bhagat Sihgh's remaining comrades, formed themselves into the Communist Co-ordination. Later, some members of the Chittagong group in the Andamans also switched over to Communism. These people were, however, outnumbered by the political workers of the Congress engaged in the rural areas, most of whom were exponents of Gandhiji's sarvodaya ideology.

It is in the context of these general trends that new alignments developed in the liberation struggle.

STATES' PEOPLES MOVEMENTS IN THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

British India was ruled by the direct executive authority of the Viceroy. The rest of the country was made up of a large number of princely states, referred to by the British as Native States. These States varying from very large to very small in area and population and scattered all over the country and interspersing the British Indian areas, were ruled indirectly by the British through the Princes and Chiefs themselves.

The princes ruled their States as they pleased. Most of them took care to see that their relations with the British rulers were maintained with due submissive decorum. A few did not do this. This displeased the British authorities and they suffered the consequences, losing control over their States. But the main point to note is that British rule and influence in India resulted in reactionary, feudal despotism being maintained and continued in most of the princely states. By and large there was very little of democratic government; the standard of living of the people was glaringly low compared to the pomp and extravagance of the way in which the princes themselves and their nobility lived; and in quite a few cases there was positive oppression. Under ordinary circumstances a corrupt or autocratic despot was overthrown by internal revolt or aggression from outside. In the case of the Indian princely states British rule made both these impossible. The princes felt secure and entrenched in their feudal positions.

These unsatisfactory and often contradictory circumstances gave birth to local organizations in the princely states which reflected popular restiveness there. They were variously called Praja Mandal or States' Peoples' Conference; Mysore had a State Congress. All of them were local and concerned with the affairs of that particular State. When the soldiers belonging to the contingents raised by the princely states and sent to fight in the first World War returned. they helped spread of democratic ideas in their States. Moreover the non-cooperation movement produced a deep impact.

In 1920, for the first time, the Congress meeting for the annual session at Nagpur called on the princes to grant at once full responsible government in their States. But at the same time, the Congress resolutions made it clear that while people in the States (referred to as States' People) could become individual

members of the Congress, they could not use the membership to interfere in the internal affairs of individual States. If they wished to do so it would have to be in their own individual capacity not in the name of the Indian National Congress. This applied to the British Indian members of the Congress as well. Generally the Congress felt political activities in each State should be organized and controlled by the local Praja Mandal or States' Peoples' Conference.

The British Government had formed a purely consultative body of the princes called the Chamber of Princes (or Narendra Mandal) which was meant to standardize their relationship. This chamber was divided within itself because of squabbles about relative rank between different grades of princes. In the year of the appointment of the Simon Commission, the British Government also appointed the Harcourt Butler Indian States Committee to recommend measures for the establishment of a better relationship between the States and the Central government. In response to this move of the government, nationalists among the States' people, such as Balwantray Mehta and Manilal Kothari of Kathiawad, and, G. R. Abhyankar of the Deccan, convened an All-India States' Peoples Conference in December 1927, which though based on West Indian initiative was attended by 700 delegates from all over India. The AISPC's aim was to influence the governments of the States "to initiate the necessary reforms in the administration by the force of collective opinion of the people of the States," and to emphasize popular representation and self-government by the elective principle in all States. The Conference also wanted the distinction between public revenue and the private income of the ruler clearly recognized. This was necessary to end the exploitation of public monies for personal expenditure. The Conference also pleaded for the separation of the judiciary and the executive, so that autocratic

fiats would stand abolished. Finally, the AISPC urged the establishment of constitutional relations between British India and the Indian States and an effective voice for the States' people in this relationship. This it was argued would hasten the attainment of Swaraj by the whole of India.

Almost from the time the first Conference was called in December 1927, the All-India States' Peoples Conference became a permanent, continuing political organization. It was consistently anti-feudal, but not as clearly anti-imperialist as the Congress. This was to a great extent explained by the fact that as far as the States' people were concerned, the feudal system was the more direct exploiter.

One of the immediate results of the setting up of the AISPC was that the struggles of the peoples of the different States ceased to be isolated, local incidents had acquired an all-India indentity. Thus Jawaharlal Nehru in his presidential address to the Lahore Congress speaking of *Purna* Swaraj, could officially declare that :

> The Indian States cannot live apart from the rest of India...the only people who have the right to determine the future of the States must be the people of these States.

The 1929 Congress also passed a resolution endorsing the AISPC demands.

As a direct consequence of their stand that the States should be treated as integral parts of the whole of India, the AISPC had requested the British Government to agree to the people of the States being represented at the first Round Table Conference. The request was not acceded to. The AISPC then presented a memorandum to the Congress advocating an all-India federal constitution, in which all fundamental rights and privileges which the Karachi Congress had called for in British

India would be accorded to the States' people as well. The antifeudal movement thus came to be democratized and aligned to the national movement.

But Gandhiji reiterated the 1920 non-intervention stand. Gandhiji argued that a movement started externally could not be successful, and that the people of the States should learn self-reliance. However, he encouraged a Congress resolution that the princes should accord fundamental rights to their subjects.

The federal principle was recognized in the India Act of 1935 but the proposals so manipulated the situation that the States were used to obstruct the demands of nationalism. The act provided two-fifth of the seats in the Upper House and one-third of the seats in the Lower House at the Centre to the States. This was not according to the recognized pattern of proportional representation, nor, were the representatives from the States actually to represent the people of the States. They were merely to be the nominees of the rulers.

In many of the States particularly in Rajkot, Jaipur, Kashmir, Hyderabad and Travancore significant movements were launched demanding that the democratic principle should be recognized and the government administration re-organized. The princes replied with ruthless repression. Some of them tried to stem the tide of popular revolt by inflaming communal passions. The Nizam of Hyderabad, for example, tried to brand the popular movement as anti-Muslim; similarly, the Maharaja of Kashmir tried to make out that the popular movement was anti-Hindu; in Travancore it was suggested that the Christians and their Church were behind the agitation and that it was intended to overthrow the Hindu Maharaja.

The Indian National Congress had begun to support the States people in their struggle for freedom and demanded the introduction of democratic government and the grant of civil liberties to the people. Whent he Congress spoke of indepen-

dence it made it clear that the independence of all the people in India, including those in the princely states, was the ultimate goal. At the Tripuri Congress (1938) it was decided that the organization should involve itself closely with the movements in the princely states. To underline the common aspirations of all the people of India, the All-India States' Peoples' Conference elected Jawaharlal Nehru as its President in 1939. The movements in the princely states not only stirred the political consciousness of the people in the States, but it was also responsible for introducing a new dimension to the concept of the unity of India.

INTEREST IN WORLD AFFAIRS

It was during the latter half of the 1930's that the Indian national movement in general and the Congress leadership in particular began taking a more conscious interest in world affairs and learning to correlate happenings abroad and their impact on the people at home.* From the very beginning the Indian leaders had objected to the use of the Indian army and Indian resources to further British imperial ambitions in foreign countries, specially those of Africa and Asia. This opposition crystalized and formulated itself as a policy of the Congress from its inception in 1885. As a direct result of this the Congress had also begun to formulate a foreign policy for the country, which will serve her own interests and not those of Britain. This policy was generally in favour of opposing all forms of imperialism. In February 1927, Jawaharlal Nehru attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels. This conference had been organized by political exiles and revolutionaries from Asian. African and Latin American countries, where the people were suffering from economic or political exploitation by the

imperialist powers. The Brussels Congress wanted to co-ordinate and plan a common struggle against imperialism. Nehru attended as a representative of the Indian National Congress. In his address to the Congress he said :

> We realize that there is much in common in the struggle which various subject and semi-subject and oppressed people are carrying on today. Their opponents are often the same, although they sometimes appear in different guises, and, the means employed for their subjection are often similar.

It was at this Brussels Congress that the League Against Imperialism was founded. Nehru was elected a member of the League's Executive Council. At the Madras Congress which was held towards the end of the same year, after an excited discussion, the government was definitely warned that India would not be prepared to support any war or war-like activity undertaken by Britain to further or safeguard its imperialist objectives.

In the 1930's the Congress became more and more firm in its stand against imperialism in any part of the world. The Congress openly supported national movements in the countries of Asia and Africa. By this time fascism was emerging in Italy, Germany and Japan as a new threat to democracy. In its own fanatical way fascism was one type of imperialism. It was also racialist in concept. The Congress, therefore, gave unqualified support to anti-fascist struggles in Ethiopia, Spain and Czecho-slovakia. In 1937 Japan attacked China. The Congress branded this as an act of imperialist aggression and passed a resolution asking the Indian people "to refrain from the use of Japanese goods as a mark of their sympathy with the people of China." Next year in 1938 a medical mission, under Dr M. Atal, and, including Dr Kotnis, was sent to China to work with the Chinese army.

This policy of the Indian National Congress was the outcome of a recognition that the future of the countries of Asia and Africa was interlinked, and, that the approaching struggle between fascism and the forces of freedom, socialism and democracy would seriously affect India. Though these ideas were shared by the large majority of the Indian leaders, it was Nehru who was their chief spokesman on foreign affairs. In this he spoke not only for the Congress but for the entire nation. He was the first, among the Indian leaders, to recognize the importance of world events in the development of our own country and he gave repeated expression to his views on this subject. For example, in his presidential address to the Lucknow Congress in 1936 he said :

> Our struggle was but part of a far wider struggle for freedom, and the forces that moved us were moving millions of people all over the world and driving them into action. Capitalism, in its difficulties, took to fascism...it became, even in some of its homelands, what its imperialist counterpart had long been in the subject colonial countries. Fascism and imperialism thus stood out as the two faces of the now decaying capitalism... Socialism in the west and the rising nationalism of the Eastern and other dependent countries opposed this combination of fascism and imperialism.

Nehru stressed that India would not participate in any war between imperialist powers. India would, however, wholeheartedly offer her support "to the progressive forces of the world, to those who stood for freedom and the breaking of political and social bonds," for "in their struggle against imperialism and fascist reaction, we realize that our struggle is a common one."

GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM

The limited democracy granted by the 1935 Act, once again sparked off trends of regionalism as well as communalism, both of which were nurtured by the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the government, the semi-feudal forces of the zamindars and landlords all over the country and the rise of a type of militant religious fanaticism. The Congress won only 26 of the 58 seats reserved for the Muslims which it contested. Even of these 26 seats 15 were won in the North West Frontier Province due to the powerful influence of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Khudai Khidmatgars. The Muslim League captured not many more seats from those reserved for the Muslims. The Congress realized that in spite of its own deliberately postulated and sincere desire to plead the cause of the whole nation, in spite of the nationalist Muslims in its ranks, the Muslim masses were yet to be won over. So the party went about consolidating its position with the victories won and giving serious thought to the need for organizing a mass-contact programme.

The Muslim League launched a bitter attack on the Congress accusing it of trying to deprive the Muslim minority of its separate identity and integrity. The League began to expound the theory that the Hindus and Muslims were in fact two different nations.

Among the Hindus also, caste based associations under apparently general democratic banners now became prominent. Chief among these were Dr Ambedkar's Independent Workers' Party in Bombay, principally of depressed class workers, supported by the NTUF leaders, and, the revived Justice Party in Madras opposed to the allegedly Brahmin-dominated Congress. Similar organizations sprouted in other areas also. The Hindu Mahasabha was already in existence. Early in 1935, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh came into existence. The Hindu

communalists further embittered Hindu-Muslim relations in the years to come. To match the Muslim communal theory of two nations they erected the equally unscientific theory that Hindus formed the Indian nation and the followers of other religions were 'foreigners.' The effect of both communal theories was to divide the Indian people and thus weaken the struggle against foreign rule. Moreover these Hindu and Muslim communal organizations taught their followers to fight against the Congress. Towards foreign imperialists they had an attitude of submission and cooperation. Whenever the British Government attacked the Congress and other nationalist organizations the two communal groups co-operated with the authorities.

Communal tension grew after 1939. The root of this increased communal tension was not Congress intransigence, but the reactions between British imperial policy and Indian communalism and regionalism. The British policy, while appearing to increase the quantum of representative government, tried to encourage the aspirations for power of the urban properties and rich peasant classes and the elements of hierarchical and undemocratic conservatism to which some sections of the people were still prone. These classes tended to seek help from regionalist and communalist parties, Hindu as well as Muslim, which danced to the rhythm of 'Divide and Rule'.

In the provinces where the Congress ministries took office several reforms were introduced by the governments in the field of labour dispute arbitration, improvement of Harijans' conditions, dissemination of primary education and to tackle the glaring problem of cheap drink being available in shops near the industrial areas of towns. Prohibition was initiated by the Congress ministry in Madras. This led to prohibition becoming a plank of future Congress programmes. The Madras government also initiated a system of tripartite bargaining in labour disputes in which Government provided a

conciliation machinery for trade unions and employers to settle their differences. This system also, became an important element in future labour relations during the post-Independence period. It represented a liberal attempt to resolve labour disputes by the use of the collective bargaining method. It increased the political strength of trade unions, but also made them more amenable to appeals for industrial harmony. The left-wing trade unions criticized it as leading to class collaboration between the workers and capitalists, and, therefore, to the perpetuation of the capitalist system. In general, the Congress ministries' positive actions from 1937 to 1939 represent attempts by right-wing and moderate nationalist leaders to implement Gandhian policies, which became a part of the official creed of the Indian government in the early years after Independence.

N.W.F.P., Punjab, Sind, Bengal and Assam were the provinces for which Pakistan had been demanded in 1935. But the Muslim League had fared poorly in the elections in these areas. It had done well only in provinces like U.P. where the Muslims were a minority. If the Congress had read the lessons of the 1937 elections correctly they would have interpreted the failure of many Muslims to vote for it, as an expression of fears by regional religious minorities that the reiigious majority, namely, the Hindus, might use their preponderance in the Provincial Governments to eliminate them. The Congress was not able to realize that such fears come naturally to a minority in any country and that these fears were encouraged by the wide prevalence of communal thinking, within and outside the Congress ranks. Many Congress leaders felt that a resolute struggle against communalism within its own ranks and an effort to educate and win over the anti-imperialist and independent Muslims by adopting a friendly and understanding approach towards them, and a vigorous effort to organize

the peasantry against all feudal elements, was the only answer in the situation.

In March 1937, Nehru announced the formation of a Congress wing to organize mass contact with Muslims and to convey the anti-imperialist struggle to them. This persuaded religious groups of North Indian Muslims like the Majlis-i-Ahrar and the Jamait Ulema-i-Hind to join hands with the Congress. But the mass contact programme did not fully succeed because the Congress leadership was unable to mobilize all sections of the exploited people.

But this mass-contact programme accentuated the fears of the Leaguers like the wealthy western U.P. landowner Liaquat Ali Khan, who now became one of the staunch supporters of Jinnah. They were afraid that the increasingly radical agrarian programme of the Congress would undermine their semi-feudal position and that the growth of anti-imperialist sentiments among the Muslims would lead to the withdrawal of official patronage of the communal leaders.

But, obviously, the communal elements could not offer these as reasons for their opposition to the Congress. Instead, they seized the opportunity to exaggerate the failures of the Congress. In Bengal they accused the Congress of following a pro-landlord, right-wing policy. In the U. P. they exploited the Congress failure to develop a mass-contact policy and at the same time accused it of having weakened the Muslim upper class. In his presidential address to the Lucknow session of the League in 1937, Jinnah declared that the Congress ministries were being unjust and oppressive towards the Muslims.

The Muslim League began an active programme of political expansion. By 1938, 170 new League branches had been established, 90 in the U. P. and 40 in the Punjab. One lakh members were enlisted in the U. P. alone. A Bangla Desh historian, Prof A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed has evaluated correctly

this phase of Muslim League politics, in the context of the demand for Pakistan, which it made in 1940. In a paper presented at an UGC Seminar on Bangla Desh held in Calcutta in April 1972, Prof Ahmed stated :

> The movement which led to the creation of Pakistan was not a religious movement... Fear of Hindu political domination which would adversely affect the (Muslim) community's political, economic and cultural interests seemed to have been important factor which influenced the movement. Although in traditional Islam, politics and religion are inseparable this is no longer true of contemporary Muslim society... Few of the leaders of the movement had any deep personal attachment to traditional Islam. It was precisely for this reason that orthodox Muslims represented by such organization as Majlis-i-Ahrar, Jamait Ulema-i-Hind did not support the League, maintaining that its leadership was not quite Islamic. Despite the opposition of these orthodox Muslim theologians (it should be noted that not all Muslim theologians were opposed to the Muslim League) the Muslim League gained the adherence of Muslim middle class and through it the Muslim masses. To them Pakistan offered an opportunity for many-sided development without fear of competition.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

When War broke out in September 1939, it placed the Indian leaders in a difficult situation. They were totally opposed to the Fascist philosophy standing as it did for a kind of ruthless totalitarianism which included in it elements of racialist bigotry. Even before 1939, during the years Fascism was emerging as a

political philosophy with an expansionist programme of aggression, many Indian leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru had been much perturbed at the developments in Europe. The Congress had in unequivocal terms condemned Fascism and declared themselves openly in support of the suffering people of Spain, Ethiopia and Czechoslovakia. Their attitude to the development of Fascist trends in Japan was the same and they logically supported China when she was attacked, branding Japan as the aggressor. But they were as strongly opposed to imperialism. Their attitude to the war would, therefore, depend on its aims and objectives. If it was going to be a war between the old imperial powers anxious to retain their colonies and their colonial domination over many nations of Asia and Africa and the new imperialists represented by the fascist powers, who wanted their own share in the spoils of colonialism, India would have nothing to do with it. But if the Allies were going to change their ways and fight the fascists really and truly to 'save the world for democracy', India would offer her support to the maximum extent possible. There must, however, be tangible evidence to show that the Allies meant what they professed. Specifically, Britain should immediately give up her imperial and colonial domination of India and arrange for a reasonable quantum of self-government by the Indians themselves.

But these feelings of the leaders and people of India were neither heeded nor even taken into consideration. On 3 September 1939 war was declared. This automatically committed India to belligerency. The federal part of the India Act of 1935 had not yet been given effect to, and, therefore, purely from the constitutional point of view the Viceroy's action was both legal and valid. But it was scarcely likely to appeal to Indian sentiments. There existed a Central Legislature. There were popular governments in the Provinces. There were well organized, fully recognized political parties in the country. There were

many leaders of the Indian people with whom the Government had been accustomed to hold discussions with a view to arriving at mutually acceptable solutions to problems. But none of them were consulted. This was all the more shocking to the Indian people because the Government had had prior indication of the attitude of the Indian leaders to the impending war. In the summer of 1939, the Congress Party in the Central Legislative Assembly had abstained from the session as a protest against Indian troops being sent to Malaya and the Far East as a precautionary measure.

But, possibly because of the very strong anti-fascist feelings among the leaders, the Congress's immediate reaction to the declaration of war was conciliatory. On 14 September 1939 the Congress issued a statement which clearly explained the views of the party :

> If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it... A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic cooperation... (but) cooperation must be between equals and by mutual consent... The Working Committee, therefore, invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged; in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present... The real test to any declaration is its application in the present...

The Viceroy's reply was far from satisfactory from the Indian point of view. After having delayed answering for more than

a month, the Viceroy regretted on 17 October 1939 his inability to elaborate the war aims of Britain further than the Prime Minister had done. As for the immediate present, the Viceroy was prepared to include more Indians in the Executive Council. Transfer of substantial power to the Indian people was considered impracticable during the war. A carrot was, however, dangled at a safe distance, in the hope that it would offer some consolation to the cruelly disappointed Indian nation. After the war, Britain would be prepared to consult various sections and groups to see what modifications were necessary in the 1935 Act so that "India may attain her due place among the great Dominions".

Not only was there to be no immediate indication of Britain's willingness to part with power but even in the distant future, it was still to be Dominion Status within the empire, not full and complete freedom. The statement was most unacceptable to the Congress, and, therefore, the Working Committee rejected the Viceroy's offer and called on the Congress ministries to resign before the end of October.

But the door was left slightly open. The statement indicated that if there should be a change in Britain's attitude and policy, room could be found for cooperation. "In the circumstances," the statement said, "the committee cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy..." This amounted to an offer of conditional cooperation if the British policy towards India should change.

Even a year later, in October 1940, when Gandhiji thought of launching a fresh Satyagraha movement, it was decided that the campaign should be limited to selected individuals. This was because in spite of the recalcitrant attitude of the Government, neither the Congress nor Gandhiji wanted the war effort to be seriously hampered by a mass movement. The Satyagraha

was, in fact, intended to disprove the British claim that India was wholeheartedly helping the war effort. Gandhiji explained the aim of the individual Satyagraha movement in a letter to the Viceroy :

> ...The Congress is as much opposed to victory for Nazism as any British citizen can be. But their objective cannot be carried to the extent of their participation in the war. And since you and the Secretary of State for India have declared that the whole of India is voluntarily helping the war effort, it becomes necessary to make clear that the vast majority of the people of India are not interested in it. They make no distinction between Nazism and the double autocracy that rules India.
>
> This individual civil disobedience movement was launched in October 1940. Vinoba Bhave was selected by Gandhiji to be the first leader to offer satyagraha.

THE CRIPPS MISSION

The war in Europe progressed to a climax by 1941. Having over-run Poland, Belgium, Holland, Norway and France, as well as most of Eastern Europe, though the Battle of Britain had been lost, Germany launched an attack on Russia in June 1941. In December Japan came into the war with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour. Thus, by the end of 1941, the war had assumed the proportions of a world conflagration, with the United States and the Soviet Union fully involved and fighting on the side of the Allies. But this did not seem to foretell an early victory. On the other hand, in the Asian theatre the early successes were all in favour of Japan. Philippines, Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaya and Burma were all rapidly conquered.

The Japanese forces occupied Rangoon in March 1942. India's frontiers were directly threatened.

Britain was now desperately anxious to have the full and active cooperation of India, not only to halt the Japanese advance but for the overall war effort. To secure this cooperation, Britain felt that India had to be offered some firm promises for the future and a fuller measure of self-government for the present. The British Government accordingly sent Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the War Cabinet, to India with a Draft Declaration. A brilliant lawyer and an avowed socialist, he had long been a serious student of the Indian question and had the reputation of being favourably disposed to Indian aspirations. He was known to Nehru personally. But the Draft Declaration he had brought did not contain much to recommend it. It offered Dominion Status immediately the war ended, but also gave India the right of secession. To implement this proposal a Constituent Assembly would be set up as soon as hostilities ceased. The members of the Assembly were to be drawn from both British India and the Native States. The British Indian members would be elected by the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislatures. The representatives from the States would be nominated by the rulers. The British Government agreed to accept the constitution framed by the Assembly and negotiate a treaty arrangement with India. But there was a proviso that any Province could, if it so desired, remain outside the Indian Union and negotiate direct with Britain. For the duration of the war no constitutional changes were proposed, but the hope was expressed that the Indian parties and leaders would agree to co-operate in the formation and functioning of a 'National Government'. The actual military aspects of defence would, of course, continue to be looked after by the British Commander-in-Chief, but there would be an Indian as Defence Member.

This Declaration was rejected by almost all the parties, though for different, and often for diametrically opposite reasons. The Congress could not be expected to welcome the principle of non-accession for any Province. The Working Committee, however, accepted the democratic principle of self-determination. Therefore, the Committee's resolution went out of its way to state that "the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people of any territorial unit to remain in an Indian union against their declared and established will". The Congress also found 'the introduction of non-representative elements' in the Constituent Assembly unacceptable. But most of all it did not want to rely on future promises. It wanted a tangible share in political power in the present. To fight for freedom in other lands, it wanted some form of self-government here and now. The Muslim League on the other hand welcomed the possibility of Provinces remaining outside the Union, because of the recognition implicit in it that the Muslim majority Provinces and areas may, if they so desired, form a separate Union of their own. But the League criticized the proposals because the procedure envisaged for the drafting of a constitution was vague and the offer itself was rigid and did not permit of any modifications. The Hindu Mahasabha feared partition of the country, and, therefore, opposed the proposals; the Sikh communalists because they were afraid that the Muslim majority of the Punjab would opt to stay out of the Union; Ambedkar because he feared the Harijans would be left at the mercy of caste Hindus. All of them found the proposals for the interim period vague and unsatisfactory as the measure of Indian control over the administration was not specifically spelt out. That nothing much by way of self-government was proposed became clear when Cripps who had spoken of a 'National Government' and about a 'Cabinet' during the early stages of the talks, suddenly clarified that only an expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council was

intended. Ultimately, the proposals were rejected and the Cripps Mission failed to resolve the deadlock.

THE REVOLT OF 1942

The failure of the Cripps Mission plunged the country in despondency and anger. There was a general mood of frustration prevalent in most quarters. The only exceptions were the Muslim League and some individuals who had benefited from the enlarged employment opportunities and lucrative contracts the war had brought. But the question was what step to take next. Inaction was intolerable.

Gandhiji had not taken much interest in the Cripps offer but the failure of the mission had disappointed him very much. He was also perturbed by the developments in South East-Asia. The British withdrawal from Malaya, Singapore and Burma had been followed by a total collapse of local resistance and surrender to Japan was total and abject. A similar catastrophe had overtaken Philippines and Indonesia. What was called 'defence in depth' with its scorched earth policy had ravaged the countries wholesale. A taste of what the future might hold in store for India was available in the havoc that had resulted from the destruction of thousands of small river boats in Bengal to prevent them falling into enemy hands should there be an invasion through the eastern frontier. Not only had the economy of Bengal been seriously affected but a major crisis had developed in the distribution of food supplies. Gandhiji and the Congress leaders were anxious that what had happened in Malaya and Burma should not be repeated in India. The people reacted in panic when faced with military aggression. They did not face the crisis with defiant resistance. This too should be prevented in India. Gandhiji came to the conclusion that the only way the people of

India could be made to shed all fear and fight the aggressor was to make them feel not only that they were their own masters but also that the defence of the country was their duty and they could not shirk the responsibility in the belief that defence was the concern of the British. Therefore, he decided to launch a movement calling upon the British to hand over power to the Indians and quit. Gandhiji explained : "I know that the novelty of this idea and that too at this juncture has caused a shock to many people. Even at the risk of being called mad, I had to tell the truth if I was to be true to myself. I regard it as my solid contribution to the war and to India's deliverance from the peril."

Many of the leaders considered the moment inopportune to make such a drastic demand. They were afraid of the consequences of panic and anarchy on the one hand and total helpless subjugation of the people by a ruthless enemy like Japan on the other. Nehru had still other thoughts. The failure of the Cripps Mission had deprived the leaders of an opportunity to co-operate in full measure in the defence of the country. Was the country now to be plunged in a massive upheaval which might result in the defeat of the anti-fascist efforts of the Allies ? He was particularly concerned about the choice between fighting the imperialist domination of India by Britain and letting down Russia and China in their war against the Axis powers.

The arguments and discussions were long and bitter. Gandhiji was firm but also overwhelmingly persuasive. He agreed that the British forces might remain in India, that they might even be offered bases to operate from, on condition that political power was transferred to India immediately. If even this was not acceptable he would leave the Congress and "out of the sands of India create a movement which would be larger than the Congress itself".

The Working Committee met in Wardha early in July and

formulated the 'National Demand'. It called upon Britain immediately to transfer power to Indians and 'Quit India'. If the proposal was rejected "the Congress will then be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920", and launch a movement of direct action. A meeting of the AICC was called at Bombay on 7 August to endorse this policy decision.

Meantime, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek of China and President Roosevelt of the United States tried to persuade Britain to resolve the deadlock and come to terms with India. But Churchill was uncompromising. He publicly declared that he had not "become His Majesty's first minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire".

The AICC session at Bombay in August 1942 has become historic. It passed the famous 'Quit India' resolution. It was not, however, a bald, uncompromising demand. There was an offer of cooperation in the war effort contained in it. It also challenged the Government to act and act immediately. "On the declaration of India's independence a Provisional Government will be formed and a Free India will become an ally of the United Nations." The Muslim League was promised a constitution "with largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in these units". In conclusion the resolution plainly stated "that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government... The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction... the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale ..such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji."

After the resolution had been passed Gandhiji addressed the assembled delegates. In the course of his speech he said : "The actual struggle does not commence this very moment. You have

merely placed certain powers in my hands. My first act will be to wait upon His Excellency the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. This may take two or three weeks. What are you going to do in the meantime ? There is the spinning wheel...but there is something more you have to do... Everyone of you should, from this moment, consider himself a free man or woman and even act as if you are free and no longer under the heel of this imperialism..."

But the Government did not wait for Gandhiji to meet the Viceroy. The official machinery had obviously been kept on the ready and it moved with lightning speed. Within hours after the AICC meeting had concluded late on the night of 8 August, Gandhiji and all the members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested and hustled away from Bombay in a special train. Gandhiji was detained at the Aga Khan Palace in Poona; the other leaders were sent to Ahmednagar Fort.

News of the 'Quit India' resolution and of the arrest of the leaders reached the people together on the morning of 9 August. They were aghast and taken completely unawares. Public reaction was immediate and spontaneous. Public life virtually came to a standstill; all business was suspended. Every city and town observed a hartal. There were demonstrations and processions everywhere. National songs and slogans demanding the release of the leaders rent the air. There was no violence as yet. Agitated and excited though they were, the crowds remained on the whole peaceful. But there was much tension and the very size of the crowds made the Government nervous. When the crowds did not heed warnings and refused to disperse, the police invariably opened fire. In Delhi alone during two days (11 and 12 August) the police opened fire on unarmed crowds on fortyseven differnt occasions. Seventysix persons were killed and one hundred and fourteen severely injured. It was the same

everywhere — public demonstrations, police violence and firing, arrests.

Very soon the situation went completely out of control. The people had no guidance; most of the leaders were in prison; some had gone underground; and passions were raging high. Individuals and groups interpreted the situation to the best of their lights and acted as they thought best. The continuing police repression and 'Ordinance Raj' further inflamed the feelings of the people. There had been no Congress call for civil disobedience. Therefore, what started as individual acts of angry defiance, soon swelled into a movement, and the movement into a revolt.

The revolt was spearheaded by the students, workers and the peasants. There were strikes in factories, colleges and schools. Police Stations, Post Offices and Railway Stations which were considered the symbols of British authority in the country were attacked, set on fire or wrecked. Later some acts of sabotage were also indulged in. Telephone wires were cut and attempts made to derail trains. There was continuous exhortation to peasants to withhold tax payments. In many areas, the peasants set up alternative regimes, where the writ of the Government did not run for days and weeks. In Balia, the local leaders took over the town and had to be driven out by armed detachments. In Sutahata, Satara, and the Karnataka the peasantry started underground guerilla resistance to British rule, which continued till 1944. Jai Prakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Aruna Asaf Ali were among the prominent leaders of the underground movement. Revolutionary violence occurred on a larger scale. The revolt was not confined to British India alone. People in many of the Native States were also affected. The Government reacted sharply and let loose a reign of terror. Lathi-charges, firing and mass arrests became such a common feature that the country was transformed into a police state. There were several

cases of unarmed crowds being machine-gunned from the air. Police atrocities became daily occurrences. Punitive fines and summary sentences became the order of the day. The revolt was short-lived but intense. The Government succeeded in putting it down but not before over ten thousand people had died in police and military firings. Such wide-scale and intense repression had not been seen in the country since the Revolt of 1857.

The Revolt of 1942 failed because an unarmed people without leaders and proper organization could not win against the mighty strength of an imperial government in power. But the revolt had achieved two things. It had given utterance to India's anger against imperialism and her determination to be free, in a striking and unmistakable manner; it was a living testament to the white hot intensity nationalist feelings had reached and the limits to which the people were prepared to suffer and sacrifice in exercise of their right to be free. Secondly, after the Revolt of 1942 there could have been no doubt left in the minds of the British rulers that the days of imperialist domination of India were strictly numbered.

In one sense the Revolt of 1942 marked the culmination of the Indian Freedom Movement. After the August 1942 uprising, it was only a question of time and determining the actual mechanics of the transfer of power and the pattern of Government the country was to have after independence. There were no doubt many political developments and much parleying and bargaining between the 1942 Revolt and the actual coming of independence in 1947. But that the freedom struggle was bound to win was no longer in doubt.

THE SIMLA CONFERENCE

By the spring of 1945, the war in Europe was moving to an end. In India, Linlithgow had been succeeded by Wavell as

Viceroy. He was a professional soldier and had been Commander-in-Chief of India when Linlithgow was Viceroy. The opinion of the military experts at that time was that the war with Japan may continue for some time—at least one year—more. With this view Wavell, as an army man himself, concurred. (There was no clue yet as to the dramatic end of the war in Asia with the induction of nuclear weapons in August 1945). Continuance of the war in Asia would mean greater use and fuller utilization of bases in India and of Indian resources. In the prevailing political temper of the country Wavell felt it would be essential to break the impasse and find a way to involve the leadership and people of India in fighting the Japanese.

In April 1945 the war in Europe ended. Churchill resigned and fresh elections were due to be held. On 14 June new proposals were announced to introduce further constitutional changes in India 'within the framework of the 1935 Government of India Act'. All the members of the Congress Working Committee were released—the detention order on Gandhiji had already been lifted—and a conference of representative political leaders was called. It was to be held at Simla starting on 25 June.

The proposals were conciliatory to some extent but unsatisfactory and provocative in one respect. The Viceroy's Executive Council was to be wholly Indian, except for the Viceroy himself and the British Commander-in-Chief. The Viceroy's special powers would not officially lapse but an assurance was available that they would not be used 'unreasonably'. Thus far it was some progress. Then came the divisive characteristic. There would be 'equal proportions of caste Hindus and Moslems', in the Council. This meant that the Muslim League's demand for parity on a communal basis had been endorsed for the first time in an official declaration of British policy. But the proposals were 'not an attempt to obtain or impose a constitutional settlement' but would be discussed at the Simla Conference.

There was an impression of hope and optimism when the Conference started, but very soon it was clear that Jinnah's intransigence and rearguard action by the imperialists would make it impossible for it to succeed. The negotiations broke down because Jinnah insisted that all the Muslim members of the Executive Council should be nominated only by the League. Nor were the British willing to sign any agreement with the Congress to which the Muslim League was not a party. The policy of 'Divide and Rule' was at its zenith.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

After the Revolt of 1942 had been crushed and put down, till the end of the war in 1945 there was scarcely any political activity in the country. The well-known leaders were all in prison and the situation was not capable of throwing up a new leadership. There was a general spirit of ennui, though latent fires continued to burn underneath. The war dragged on but the national movement had come to a standstill.

Subhas Chandra Bose had left India secretly in March 1941 to go to the Soviet Union and seek their help in India's struggle for freedom. But the Soviet Union was attacked by Germany in June 1941 and had joined the Allies. Bose, therefore, went to Germany to see if he could obtain help from there. After receiving some assurances from the Germans, he went to Japan to organize the liberation of India with Japanese help. Meanwhile Japan had tried to raise an Indian National Army with the help of the officers and men of the Indian Army who had been left behind after the British withdrawal from Malaya and Burma, others who had been taken prisoners—there were 60,000 of them in Malaya alone—and Indian civilians who had been resident in the South-East Asian countries and were now stranded there unable to return home. Subhas Bose took

charge of this army, which now joined the Japanese army and began its march towards India. The officers and men of the INA were inspired by a sense of patriotism and they wanted to enter India as her liberators. Subhas Bose was to be the head of the Provisional Government of Free India.

The INA plans went awry with the defeat of Japan. Subhas Bose was killed in a plane accident while on his way to Tokyo. It is true that many leaders did not like the idea of India winning freedom with the assistance of a country like Japan and her Fascist allies. But, during the closing years of the war, Subhas Bose and the INA served to hold up the drooping spirits of the nationalist Indians at home, who were feeling helpless and frustrated; they set before all sections of the Indian people, including those serving in the army, an example of courage and patriotism which was both inspiring and ennobling.

Therefore, when the Government announced their decision to prosecute some of the INA officers for treason because they had broken their oath of loyalty to the British Crown, there was a wave of nationalist protest. There were massive demonstrations all over the country. There were persistent demands that the officers should be released. Not only the Congress, but almost the entire political leadership of the country was opposed to the trials and expressed themselves emphatically in favour of releasing the INA officers. The Congress set up an INA Defence Committee which consisted of such eminent lawyers as Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Kailashnath Katju and Asaf Ali. Nehru also was a member of the Committee. A great sense of drama gripped the nation as these national leaders stood up to defend the INA officers in the historic hall of Delhi's Red Fort. The Court Martial held all the accused guilty and they were convicted. But public

opinion was so emotionally charged that the Government had to yield. The sentences were suspended and the INA officers set free.

THE END OF THE STRUGGLE

With the cessation of hostilities it was clear that Indian independence could no longer be delayed. Various developments abroad and at home were responsible for convincing Britain of this. The war had completely changed the position and power of Britain in the world. The Soviet Union and the United States had emerged as the big powers and both were in favour of Indian independence. Though Britain was victorious in the war, its economy and military strength had been seriously damaged and she needed time for reconstruction and rehabilitation. Her people, especially the defence personnel, were war weary and were not prepared to continue to toil for the defence of the empire. The Conservatives had been defeated in the elections and the Labour Party which had assumed office was in favour of acceding to the Indian demands. The most important consideration, however, was the fact that the situation in India had completely changed and it was no longer possible for the British to continue in power. The INA trials had proved conclusively that the nation was no longer in a mood to put up with repression or be satisfied with vague promises. The fighting spirit of India had been aroused and if the nationalist demands were not adequately met the situation would become explosive. There was ample evidence for reaching this conclusion. The revolt of the Indian naval ratings at Bombay in Feburary 1946, widespread discontent and strikes in the Indian Air Force, a strike by the Indian Signal Corps at Jabalpur, had all proved this beyond doubt. Even the police and the

bureaucracy had begun to reveal nationalist leanings. It would be unsafe to try to use them to suppress or put down a national movement. Furthermore strikes, hartals and demonstrations were increasing all over British India and were spreading to the Princely States also.

The British Government, therefore, decided to transfer power to India and to work out the details, both long range and short term, they sent a Cabinet Mission to India. After long and detailed discussions with various leaders representing all the parties and organizations, the Cabinet Mission announced its plan, which was accepted by both the Congress and the Muslim League. But later, differences arose regarding the interpretation of the scheme. But Wavell was anxious that an interim government should be set up as soon as possible. Such a government was finally formed by the Congress in September 1946 with Jawaharlal Nehru heading the Council of Ministers. In October the Muslim League also joined the Cabinet, but they decided not to participate in constitution making. The British Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, announced on 20 February 1947 that the British would transfer power to India latest by June 1948.

Lord Louis Mountbatten was sent to India as Viceroy to arrange for the transfer of power. In spite of serious differences that arose between the Congress and the Muslim League, Lord Mountbatten worked out a compromise plan and also brought forward the date for the transfer of power by more than a year. India would become free on 15 August 1947. But the country would be partitioned. The western areas of the Punjab, the North West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the west and the eastern half of Bengal and Sylhet district in Assam were to form the new independent State of Pakistan, which would be inaugurated simultaneously with India. There was provision, however, for a later plebiscite

in the NWFP and Sylhet district to ascertain the wishes of the people.

The pride and joy in the achievement of freedom was diluted by the pain and sadness of partition and the consequences of partition. But the nation was not despondent. Freedom was only the first step. With self-confidence, faith and hope India began to march forward to meet the challenges of freedom and democracy and social justice.

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